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DRAMATISTS CLUB SERIES NO. 2

LADY GODIVA

A Play in Four Acts

BY

JOSEPH I. C. CLARKE



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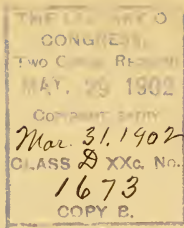
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THE CHARACTERS.

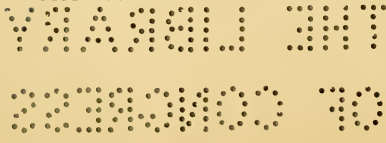
- Leofric*.....Eorl of Chester
- Bertulf*.....Thegn of Leicester
- Siegfred*.....Bertulf's steward
- Hundibert*.....Saxon etheling
- Cuthwolf*.....Saxon soldier of Bertulf's huscarles
- Edric*.....Duke of Mercia
- Oswald*.....Danish captain in Edric's service
- Ragnal*.....Danish soldier in Edric's service
- Gurth*.....A swineherd, a thrall of Bertulf's
- Grimbald*.....A mason, a freeman of Bertulf's
- Rusty Runnion*.....The gleeman
- Tomas Ap-Tomas*.....A Welsh harper
- Dunstan*.....A Saxon hermit monk
- Canute*.....King of Denmark, Norway and England
- Jarl Thorold*.....Captain of Canute's fleet
- Wilfred*.....A Messenger of Edric's
- Ingulf*.....The dumb headsman of Edric
- Alfred*.....The child of Grimbald and Eadburga
- Lady Godiva*.....Daughter of Bertulf
- Lady Wynfreda*.....
- Edelgitha*.....Abbess of St. Michael
- Sister Angeline*.....A nun
- Adelene*.....Lady Godiva's tiring woman
- Jillen, goose-girl*.....}
- Eadburga, wife of Grimbald*.....}....Thralls of Bertulf

Saxon huscarles, Danish guards, Saxon nobles, Saxon peasant girls, nuns of St. Michael, townsmen and townswomen of Coventry.

TIME, 1016 A.D.....SCENE, ENGLAND.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY.

- ACT I.—Courtyard quadrangle of Thegn Bertulf's Manor.
- ACT II.—On Bardon Hill.
- ACT III.—Scene 1: Chapter room of the convent of St. Michael, the Archangel.
 Scene 2: The market square of Coventry.
- ACT IV.—Hall of Edric's Castle.



LADY GODIVA.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*The Courtyard quadrangle of BERTULF's manor. In L. corner a low, arched gate of entrance. At C. back wide entrance to the Hall up a step or two. At R. U. E. entrance to GODIVA's bower coming down a short flight of stone steps; vines trained over lattice at top of steps. The steps come down facing audience. At R. 2 another arched passage leading to inner courtyard. A door in wall at L. 3. A large oak tree (whose branches do not obscure the entrance arch) not far from the wall L. Beneath tree a rough table and some rough benches. Architecture of the latter Saxon period in England.*

DISCOVERED.—CUTHWOLF and a group of Saxon soldiers under the tree resting sullenly on their spears. RAGNAL and three other Danish soldiers grouped together closely R. of the steps to the Hall door. The groups are eyeing each other. Shouts of girlish laughter off R. and JILLEN and a crowd of girls come romping on with flowers and garlands (such flowers as hollyhocks, honeysuckle, clematis) and some, among them JILLEN, carrying flagons of ale and drinking horns. They stand an instant laughing at C. and waving their flowers.

CUTHWOLF. What, May Day in September! (*the girls laugh and come running forward*)

JILLEN. It's Lady Godiva's birthday and we've come to give her greeting.

CUTHWOLF. Our lady's with the Abbess in her bower.

JILLEN. We know that, Cuthwolf; we've come, too, for the Abbess's blessing: she's back from her holy pilgrimage to Rome.

CUTHWOLF. You need the blessing, goose-girl, and we need the ale. (*The girls laughing fill for the Saxons.*

JILLEN. *fills for* CUTHWOLF) Now, Jillen, a kiss.

JILLEN. Don't let Gurth, the swineherd, see you; he's my sweetheart.

CUTHWOLF. Why not?

JILLEN. Because he cuffs me when the men that kiss me are gone. (*Enter GURTH R.*)

CUTHWOLF. I'll kiss you anyway. (*kissing her. GURTH shows anger*) Here's to Saxon girls and Saxon ale!

THE SAXONS. Good Hail.

JILLEN. Here's to the men that drink the Saxon ale! (*They all laugh*) Oh, GURTH! (*frightened: he catches her and drags her back*)

GURTH. Will you ever do it again?

JILLEN. No; I swear, GURTH. (*swinging her round he sees the Danes*)

GURTH. Danes!

THE GIRLS (*anxiously looking round*) Danes!

GURTH. (*going to CUTHWOLF*) What are they doing here?

CUTHWOLF. Their captain is in the Hall with our lord, Bertulf. They belong to the Duke Edric's body-guard.

GURTH. His men are burning and plundering through Leicester now.

CUTHWOLF. Now? in time of peace?

GURTH. This very day I saw the smoke of farmsteads from the hills.

JILLEN. I'll offer them a horn of ale so they won't plunder us.

CUTHWOLF. It's their master, the traitor lord, who burns and robs; not they. (*to the Danes*) Come, Northmen, you're within our gates; drink with us. (*The Danes come forward and the girls pour for them*)

JILLEN. (*pouring for RAGNAL*) You're a big bonny man for all you're a Dane.

RAGNAL. Eh? Then I'll drink to you.

JILLEN. You may, but you mustn't kiss me; Gurth there wouldn't like it. (*she laughs, looking temptingly up at RAGNAL*)

GURTH. There! Asking a Dane to kiss her.

CUTHWOLF. She's a jade.

GURTH. No; it's her innocence; she don't know one man from another. Look! (*RAGNAL puts his arm around JILLEN and kisses her. All laugh except GURTH and CUTHWOLF*)

RAGNAL (*tauntingly*) Here's to Canute, our Danish King.

THE OTHER DANES. Skoal! Skoal!

CUTHWOLF. (*angrily*) Here's to Edmund Ironsides, our Saxon king.

THE OTHER SAXONS. Hail! Hail!

RAGNAL. Edmund's not the king in Mercia here.

CUTHWOLF. One blast from Edmund in London, and we'd answer it here.

RAGNAL. That's all fought out. A year ago they split
The land between them. Your Edmund is let
Rule the South; Canute the North. We smashed you
In the field, we Danes.

CUTHWOLF. With help of traitor Saxons.

RAGNAL. Lord Edric has sharp ears and sharper steel.

CUTHWOLF. You've named him. It was he who marched
the Mercians

From the field and brought defeat to England.

RAGNAL. Well, leave the kings. Try who's the better man.
I'm Ragnal, the Dane.

CUTHWOLF. I'm Cuthwulf, the Saxon.

RAGNAL. Sword, spear or quarter-staff?

JILLEN. Oh, quarter-staff.

Such rare knocks and no blood. (*they are given quarter-staffs*)

CUTHWOLF. Come on.

(*An instant of turmoil, and staff play. Enter BERTULF from Hall, followed by OSWALD and SIEGFRED*)

BERTULF. Cease there! (*the men stop*) Freeman or thrall
of mine, he dies

Who stirs up war twixt Dane and Saxon.

Go to your Hall. (*The Saxon men move off, crest-fallen*) You, Cuthwulf, stay.

OSWALD. (*to his men*) In line! (*the Danes take line*)

March! (*They march up to the gate at back*)

(*OSWALD goes up to BERTULF*)

OSWALD. Can you not send Duke Edric, lord, more
fav'ring

Promise?

BERTULF. The honor seems too great, good Oswald,
For the daughter of a simple thegn. I'll wait
His coming. Fare you well.

OSWALD. He will be here
Before the day is out. Farewell.

(*Exit with soldiers*)

BERTULF. (*to CUTHWOLF*) What mad
Swashbucklery was this? Have we not had
Our fill of fight?

CUTHWOLF. Another war is in
The wind.

BERTULF. What prattle!

CUTHWOLF. Lord, through Mercia men
Who fought the Danes before, find fiery arrows
At their doors, sure sign of war not far away.

BERTULF. I'll not believe it. To your hall, begone!

(CUTHWOLF and the men X and exit crestfallen R.)

SIEGFRED. You said embassy, my lord. From Edric?

BERTULF. That stirs me more than these mere soldier brawls.

What think you? Edric comes here questing for
My daughter's hand. I do not well know how
To take it. My fair Godiva is so young.
And made of all the fresh blown essences of Spring,
While he's mature of age and crafty, greedy,
Cruel. I know him well.

SIEGFRED. My lord it is

An honor not to be lightly flicked away.

BERTULF. Or danger not for me to trifle with.

His name stands cursed on every Saxon tongue.

A harder tyrant than the Dane he serves.

SIEGFRED. A heaven-sent wife might soften him, my lord.

BERTULF. God wot, it's hard to yield to such a man,

The sunbeam shifting from the Holy Grail,

That came to cheer my loneliness. I have

No son. He died at Assundun for England.

My heart's old iron must be iron still.

(*Is going up stage disturbed in mind when Enter flock of chattering, laughing girls, then AP-TOMAS, the white-bearded harper, and RUSTY RUNNION, the gleeman, then more girls*)

JILLEN. The Harper and the Gleeman! Come along and sing.

RUSTY RUNNION. Ho, my beauties, we'll sing you a song, play you a tune, caper a dance that will set you twirling. We're on our way to Michelmas fair at Coventry, but here we stop to catch our breath. What shall it be?

JILLEN. It must be no brawling song, for our Lady Godiva might near you (*thinks*) And it must be no lewd song for the Holy Abbess Edelgitha is with our young mistress.

RUSTY RUNNION. Brawl? Lewd? Goose-girl, my mouth is full of mother's milk; we sing vespers every day, my friend Ap-Tomas and I, Rusty Runnion, the gleeman. (*girls all laugh*)

BERTULF. Bid the Lady Godiva come to me; then set a watch for Edric's coming. Go!

(*SIEGFRED xs slowly to steps to bower. AP-TOMAS, seating himself by the tree facing the bower, plays a light prelude on the harp. RUSTY RUNNION about c., the girls grouped around him.*)

RUNNION. He plays what he pleases. The song that is stealing out on tiptoe from his ancient head-piece is the Charming of Merlin.

JILLEN. Oh, Merlin! Merlin!

GIRLS. Merlin!

RUNNION. (*singing*) Oh, oh, the song of the woodland bird.

GIRLS. Melody! Melody! Melody!

RUNNION. (*singing*) Such dainty singing never was heard.

GIRLS. Psalmody, psalmody, psalmody.

RUNNION. Blackbird, linnet and lark and thrush

All turn and wait in an eerie hush

At the voice of the bird a singing.

GIRLS. (*dancing in a ring*) On a bright May morning,
cool and airy,

Merlin mocked at sprite and fairy,

But twitter and twitter, the song went on,

Charming and thrilling till day was gone,

Oh ho, Oh ho! Oh ho!

(During the speech of RUNNION and the opening bars of the song, SIEGFRED is slowly mounting the steps. He turns and looks at BERTULF as if he were in doubt. BERTULF makes an imperious gesture to proceed and continues gazing fixedly at the door. SIEGFRED opens the door of the bower as the girls start on the chorus and Enter GODIVA from the bower full of sudden delight and glad laughter. SIEGFRED descends)

BERTULF. (*tenderly*) Godiva!

(Standing at the top of the steps, she kisses her hands to the dancing girls and leans forward on the stone balustrade)

JILLEN. (*seeing her*) Look! Our Lady Godiva.

(The girls stop singing and rush towards the bower steps. The harper keeps on playing.)

GODIVA. (*turning back to the door*) Oh, mother, mother, come to see them dance.

(to the girls) Dance that old dance again and sing with all your hearts!

(SIEGFRED Xs to BERTULF. The girls run back laughing to c. of stage and begin dancing in a ring with RUNNION, sing the chorus of the song which dies down piano as they see the aged nun and then stops and they stand still. RUNNION retiring back of harper and stretching at his feet, tired)

GODIVA. (*As enter the Abbess Edelgitha, a tall old nun with thin face, rather feeble, GODIVA assists her*)

They've come to get your blessing, mother dear.
But well I know you loved to see girls light
Of heart, if but their souls were pure.

(ADELENE, GODIVA'S tiring woman, comes out on steps)

ABBESS. (*As GODIVA helps her down the steps.*) Ah, well
You knew my love for lightsome hearts, and played
Upon it, little sunbeam of the cloister.

GODIVA. (*archly.*) I was very, very wicked, was I not?
(*seeing BERTULF*) Oh, father!

SIEGFRED. (*to BERTULF*) Why not have Edelgitha
Break the news?

BERTULF. (*to SIEGFRED*) No, no, I trust no nun with that.
They ever hold the convent door ajar.

(*The ABBESS raises her hand and the girls kneel, GODIVA kneeling at her feet*)

ABBESS. Children of fair England, if you blessing ask
I pray it on you. Rome, and the glory of
The saints I've seen. Before their glowing altars
I have knelt. So pray for me that I may gain
The heaven I've caught some glimpse of on my way.
Go now in peace, and peace be with you.

(*The girls rise and pass off. ABBESS and GODIVA, who rises, making picture at c., the ABBESS watching them, GODIVA looking lovingly at her*)

GODIVA. 'Tis a sweet wish.

ABBESS. My child, I'll not again
Go up the stair, but leave you now—Farewell
And blessing, child; (*to BERTULF*) farewell, and
thanks, good thegn!

BERTULF. (*bowing his head*) Farewell, good mother. (*to
GODIVA.*) As soon as may be,
Daughter, I've a word for you. (*goes up and exits to
Hall. SIEGFRED goes out gate*)

GODIVA. (*to ABBESS.*) I know what 'tis.
He often tells me he would build an abbey
To my martyred brother Edward's memory.

ABBESS. (*astonished.*) An Abbey? That were a Prince's
offering.

GODIVA. (*confidentially.*) He has great store of hidden
gold since he,

When young and lusty, spoiled at sea along
The Moslem Coast. (*checking herself*) I must not
speak of that. (*suddenly.*) Oh, mother, I'd for-
gotten. I've a gift

For you. (*calling*) Ho, Adelene! the coffer, quick.

ABBESS. A gift for me? You are God's gift, Godiva.

(ADELENE comes quickly down, bearing coffer)

GODIVA. (taking coffer eagerly and putting it on the ground and opening it, draws out a long airy fabric, whose folds she throzes into the air like a sudden fleccc cloud. The harper plays softly)

Look now how white and light and fair it is.
I've woven it of the young lamb's wool, as soft
And white as mists that rise on Summer morns
From Avonmere. And, oh! what dreams are in
The web of it. (kissing it.) They should be pray'rs,
but girls

Will drift from pray'rs to dreams, and so with mine.
I'll tell you, mother, may I not? When went
Our Saxon fighting men, two years ago,
To meet the Danes at Assundun, there rode
Beside my brother a young lord, and as
They passed the convent, glitt'ring and jingling, he
Looked up. I know not if he saw me; but
His face was like a young archangel's; and when
To rob the hours of weariness, I wove,
His face was ever shaping from the thread;
None but myself could see it, and my pray'rs
Were more for him than father, brother or
Myself. I thought mayhap you'd let it lie
Upon the Virgin's altar, like a pray'r
That yet was half a young girl's happy dream.

ABBESS. Upon the altar it shall lie, my child,
A web of pray'rs and dreams, and you shall have
My prayer for your dream of happy love.

GODIVA. Dear mother!

ABBESS. Yet, as I'm very old, and near
My dreamless sleep, it shall be with me when
I'm called away.

GODIVA. (fearfully) Mother!

ABBESS. (with zealot fervor) Yes, it shall be
My winding sheet, thrice blessed.

GODIVA. Not that, not that.
It frightens me.

(ADELENE replaces the web in the coffer)

ABBESS. Blindly we weave our web.
You saw no bony hand beside yours at
The loom. You cannot see the storm behind
This day of calm. Yea, when the Magdalen
Broke costly ointment on our dear Lord's feet
Was't not for his burial? (pointing to the coffer) A
winding sheet!

(Exit slowly, preceded by ADELENE bearing the coffer)

GODIVA. *(terrified)* Does it mean
That he shall die? A winding sheet! Ah, me!
That I have wrought his weird into the web:
It chills me to the marrow thinking that.

(Stands thinking. Enter BERTULF from the Hall, stands looking at her)

No; 'tis for the aged nun; 'tis not for him.

(BERTULF coming to her, she starts and turns)

Father, the Abbess said my web should be
Her winding sheet.

BERTULF. So let it be. The old
Say things like that, death looms before them so.
I've other thoughts for you. No black-draped altar,
With nuns a-praying for their dead, but one
Ablaze with light and flowers, the great church filled
With joyous song.

GODIVA. *(smiling and wondering)* Father, father, what
is't?

You love me, and would startle me to joy.

BERTULF. A lord comes questing for your hand.

GODIVA. *(laying her hand on his arm as in sudden hope)*
A lord!

BERTULF. Yes, a great lord, Godiva.

GODIVA. A great lord!

And young fair glory in his face and soul?

Such a one as

BERTULF. 'Tis the Lord Edric, Duke of Mercia.

GODIVA. *(horror-stricken.)* Edric? Edric, the traitor
lord?

BERTULF. He is great in the kingdom; stands beside
Canute.

GODIVA. He is the last in England, crawls
With the snake. No, father, no. One lives
In love. One suffers for the heart, the cause
One loves; but thus to live in loathing? No,
Father, for shame!

BERTULF. That which Duke Edric asks
Comes quick to hand or dread disaster follows.

GODIVA. What worse disaster than himself? I have
Not seen his face, but well I know it shows
The horror of the soul within.

BERTULF. Go garb
Yourself to greet him, and be wise and gracious,
As becomes the gentle born. One moment
From another he'll be here.

GODIVA. No, as I am.
I am well-garbed enough to say him nay.

(BERTULF makes a gesture of despair. Is about to address her again, when he catches sight of SIEGFRED entering hastily)

SIEGFRED. My lord, a band of horsemen spurring for
The southern gate.

BERTULF. Go greet them. If 'tis Edric—
Soft—I'll go with you. (Exit SIEGFRED, R. To GOD-
IVA.) Do not anger him!
He scatters death around him where he's thwarted.

(Exit R.)

GODIVA. A winding sheet! A winding sheet for me!

(Crosses to bower and ascends the steps, halts at top, knitting her brows. A horn blown off R. Cries of Hail. Hail. Hail. She starts and exits, making a gesture of loathing)

RUNNION. (rousing and rising.) Marry, but I've slept.
Come, Ap-Tomas, the horns are sounding and I'll go hunt-
ing—hunting food.

AP-TOMAS. I'll go with you.

RUNNION. No; no. Your white beard's good for
angling pity from young ladies, but for merry thralls and
fat old cooks, I am the hunter. Get in there, Ap-Tomas,
by the door, and play to keep yourself awake.

(The Harper exits, shaking his head, by door L., xing R.
singing, "It's ho for the life of the lordless man." A
glad shout and cheer heard off R.) RUNNION stops
singing suddenly and tiptoes up stage.

(Enter BERTULF with CUTHWOLF)

BERTULF. (troubled) Leofric, eorl of Chester?

CUTHWOLF. (delighted) Thegn, I know
Him well. He was with Edward when he died
At Assundun.

BERTULF. With Edward. (goes L.)

CUTHWOLF. See, he comes.

(Enter LEOFRIC with a guard of four Saxons, all very
bright and picturesque with glint of steel. The guards
stand by the arch. LEOFRIC advances to BERTULF.
SIEGFRED enters R.)

LEOFRIC. To Edward's father, Bertulf, thegn of Leices-
ter,
I bring greeting.

BERTULF. To you, Leofric, welcome. (*giving his hand. RUNNION steals off R.*)

LEOFRIC. I bear a message and a dear reminder
Of the bravest heart that ever died for
England.

BERTULF. Edward, my Edward! Forgive me
If my eyes are wet.

(*Goes L. to the tree still holding LEOFRIC's hand*)

I did not think to hear
The tale you bring. (*to SIEGFRED.*) Send my daughter
to us. (*SIEGFRED goes to foot of bower steps, and
raises his hand; then xs and goes out by the gate
at back*)

LEOFRIC. To speak to her will be the hardest task. (*stand-
ing facing L.*)

(*GODIVA appears at bower coming down steps, her eyes on
the ground, her head held high, her hands clenched.
CUTHWOLF and the soldiers exeunt R. at signal from
BERTULF*)

BERTULF. (*ring to her as she advances.*) GODIVA, this
good lord brings memories
Of one we loved.

GODIVA. (*low to BERTULF.*) Father, how can you bring
This utter shame to me?

BERTULF. (*low to her*) Sorrow, mayhap,
Not shame. (*to LEOFRIC.*) My daughter, lord!

(*LEOFRIC turns and looks pityingly at GODIVA*)

GODIVA. (*in sudden joy*) Oh, father, father!
You're surely not Lord Edric, sir?

LEOFRIC. No, lady:
I am Leofric, and a Saxon true.

GODIVA. And you rode forth from Coventry to fight
For Saxon England?

LEOFRIC. We rode through Coventry
As we went out to meet the Dane.

GODIVA. And you
Looked up as you went past St. Michael's gate?

LEOFRIC. Most likely. (*as recalling*) I remember Edward
said,

I have a sister somewhere by that window.
I noted that the boyish tears so dimmed
His eyes, he could not see for sure; but all
I knew was one glad sea of waving wimples,
Smiling faces and loud cries of "Hail, all hail!"

GODIVA. Oh, and amid the Market square your horse
Reared up, but you sat like a man of bronze,
And presently you spurred forth till behind
The hill you sank from view.

LEOFRIC. He said to me
I would that you had seen my sister, such
Frank faith and girlish joy light up her eyes.

(GODIVA murmurs delighted)

He was a brother and pur blind, so gave
No hint at all of what I here behold.

(she gazes on his face in a wonder of recognition)

GODIVA. To think I should remember you so well!
Just that one upward glance of yours, my lord
And I could not forget you.

BERTULF. (*who has listened anxiously*) Come within,
My lord; I'd hear of Edward, my lost boy,
For whom my heart shall ever lie in ashes.

GODIVA. Nay, father, 'neath this oak that Edward loved.
(to LEOFRIC) Sit here. (*seating him on bench round tree*)

And father here, (*seating BERTULF on seat near tree*
R. C.)

And let me thus. (*seating herself at BERTULF'S feet*)
Listen as the day wears on, and wish 'twould
Last forever.

LEOFRIC. Nay, lady, do not ask
Unsealing of that day when Saxon England
Fell as dead. At morn a splendid host! at noon
A remnant hard beset; at night a horror
Of blood and flight—and thirty thousand Saxons
Gashed and dead.

GODIVA. And Edward?

LEOFRIC. Amid the thunder
Of the last mad charge beside the king he fell,
A spear wound in his breast. As soon as I
Could raise his head, he smiled, tugged hard at this

(drawing forth small golden reliquary)

And died. I knew he wished you'd have it, so severed
With my sword the cord.

GODIVA. Oh, father, Edward's blood
Is on it.

BERTULF. I cannot look on it; it tears
My heart asunder.

GODIVA. (*kissing it.*) His blood!

LEOFRIC. Not his alone.
The Dane's as well, who slew him, whom I slew.
Between their two corpses, on that reliquary,
I swore me then to England's cause until
I die.

BERTULF. Oh, old, old and broken!

GODIVA. (*going closer to Leofric without rising.*) You
drew

It from his breast? One Easter morn I gave
It him, blessed by the Abbess Edelgitha.
And in your hand 'twas clasped when that you swore?
And ever since thus near your heart? Father,
You hear!

LEOFRIC. Ay, ever since, and in my heart
The same resolve, to rid our England of
The Dane, as at Clontarf the Irish smote them
Two years gone.

BERTULF. There's too much hate and jealousy
Among our nobles to unite for war.

LEOFRIC. Two hundred years of blood have worn a chasm
Between the Dane and Saxon. Never, in all
That time, a year when Englishmen might look
In peace across the Northern sea, lest ev'ry
Far-off flock of gulls might, closer, prove to be
A fleet of ravens.

BERTULF. Against all hope. There's peace
In England, and the harried land craves peace.

LEOFRIC. Lord Bertulf, this is but a peace with wolves.
This dog-faced Edric whom the King Canute
Has set upon our necks is worse than Dane.

GODIVA. Father! do you hear? (*to LEOFRIC.*) A base and
cruel

Traitor is he not? You would not wed him
To a Saxon swineherd's daughter, would you?
You would not? . . . Nay, I cannot say't. . . .
You'd hurt

This Edric from his lordship?

LEOFRIC. (*rising.*) Lord Bertulf,
In that cause I've staked my eorldom and my life. . . .
To give back Edmund Ironsides his own.
One England and one king of Hengist's line!
The stoutest thegns from Galloway to Lincoln
Join with me. While Edmund lives they'll hold
The pact. So, in your Edward's oak, I strike
This fire-burned arrow for a sign. Your hand,
Your help, Lord Bertulf.

BERTULF. (*rising.*) I am poor, I cannot.
 I gave long years of battle in my prime.
 I gave my son. I've scarce a dozen swords.
 GODIVA. Father, for England, Saxon England! Hear
 The song again to which you marched of old,
 "The call of Elfléd, the King's daughter."

(*The Harp is heard in a few strong chords, and then to a running obligato she recites with rising rapture*)

Dark night along England's coast,
 Up from their ships come the swarming foemen.
 Harold Sigurd heads their host;
 Swordmen and spearmen shouting to bowmen:
 "The fire, the fire for house and byre!
 The steel, the steel, till the Saxons reel!
 A Valkyr feast of thegn and yeomen!
 England, all England our spoil of war—
 A haven for Odin's raven,
 And our boast,
 That death beats time to the hammer of Thor."

Red flame that to sleepers came,
 Rose bright through the black of the night.
 Alfwyn, the Saxon king, fell in his palace.
 The monk at his prayers, the priest with the chalice.
 Wide went the wave of rapine and slaughter,
 And many a Saxon maid
 Was dragged to the Norseman's lair
 With shames untold,
 Till word came to Elfléd, the dead king's daughter,
 Who, binding her golden hair,
 And girding her father's blade,
 Cried out in her voice of gold:

"Strong sons of the Saxon land,
 Out on the foe in a whelming river,
 Shield on arm, sharp sword in hand,
 England, fair England to deliver!
 The sword, the sword on the Norseland horde!
 The spear, the spear till they blench with fear!
 Bolt from bow and arrow from quiver
 With the banner of Holy Cross before.
 To stay them and to slay them
 On the strand,
 And free our godly land for ever more.

(LEOFRIC has sunk kneeling at her feet, his eyes raised in admiration, his lips parted)

BERTULF. The old fire burns again. My old heart leaps.
They slew my son; they should be slain or driven
To the sea.

LEOFRIC. To-night on Bardon Hill, I light
The signal-flame.

BERTULF. My arm can still strike hard.

LEOFRIC. We would not ask a stroke from you, for here
(*indicating GODIVA*) Your sheltering arm finds
use; but friendly face
And refuge sure.

GODIVA. No, not to fight; but he
Can give what he'd bestow for Edward's holy
Memory—red gold to buy them swords and spears.

BERTULF. What say you, child?

GODIVA. What are the carven stones
Of monasteries, ay, of minster tow'rs
To people who are slaves? You'd build a pile
Of granite from the hills while yet the hills
Are fortresses for pirate Danes. You told
Me you'd do this. Here now is chance to build
A nation in our Edward's name.

BERTULF. You have
Betrayed my long-held hope.

GODIVA. (*pleading on her knees.*) For England, father.

BERTULF. (*after thought.*) They'll have some gold.

GODIVA. Oh dearest, dearest father! (*embracing him*)

BERTULF. You'll swear you'll never tell, whence came the
gold? (*LEOFRIC assents*)

BERTULF. (*ring r.*) Ho there; send Grimbald to me. It is
laid
Where none but he and I may find its nest.
So we save to scatter. I refused the knave
Some gold but yesterday.

(*Enter GRIMBALD, a mason. He carries a short crowbar.*
GODIVA crosses to LEOFRIC.)

BERTULF. (*taking GRIMBALD forward*) Come here. I said
To you my gold was gone. 'Tis not.

GRIMBALD. (*gruffly.*) I know't.

BERTULF. Come with me to lift up the stone.

GRIMBALD. You'd take
Some forth? (*looks at LEOFRIC*) That game's afoot?

BERTULF. What game, sir dog?

GRIMBALD. The Saxon trysting.

BERTULF. You must serve, not ask.

(*Exeunt into the hall, GRIMBALD looking back sourly at*
LEOFRIC, *who remains with GODIVA, near the tree and*
to her r.—she seated looking up at him)

LEOFRIC. (*looking after BERTULF*) He gives what much
he loves. (*during the scene LEOFRIC is only half
listening to GODIVA, and is watching for BERTULF*)

GODIVA. He loves me most.
(*after a pause.*) Even the white, lifting forefoot of
your
Black charger, I recall.

LEOFRIC. Because I rode
By Edward, whom you loved.

GODIVA. Perhaps 'twas that.

LEOFRIC. I may not linger. I have still to seek
Thegn Alstan's counsel.

GODIVA. Will he join?

LEOFRIC. If I
But find as strong a champion in his daughter
As in you, it's sure.

GODIVA. She's very beautiful,
They say?

LEOFRIC. She shone at Court when Ethelred
Was king. The harpers made gay ballads
On her eyes.

GODIVA. Wynfreda, Lady Wynfreda,
Are her eyes so beautiful?

LEOFRIC. Large and dark.
Her mother was of Spain.

GODIVA. And of the court
When you were there?

LEOFRIC. Ay, lady.

GODIVA. Then for you
She'd pray her father, just as I prayed mine?

LEOFRIC. I do not know; a fair face is not all.

GODIVA. She will; because you ask in England's cause.

LEOFRIC. Then I do hope she will, though still I doubt.

(*Enter BERTULF and GRIMBALD. BERTULF carries a leather
bag of gold*)

BERTULF. Gold, gold, long hidden from the light.

LEOFRIC. (*taking bag*) Good thegn! (*to GRIMBALD*)
Call in my men.

(*GRIMBALD goes R. and calls "ho!"*)

BERTULF. (*to LEOFRIC.*) A cup of ale before
You go? (*to GRIMBALD.*) Stir not from there till I
return.

(*GODIVA trips into the Hall*) *Enter LEOFRIC's soldiers R.*)

LEOFRIC. (*to soldiers.*) Here, Hundibert, take this and
guard

It with your lives. Await me by the gate. (*pointing
off R.*)

(*Exeunt soldiers R. GRIMBALD Xs. L. at back and goes L. of tree*)

(*SEIGFRED appears at gate back as if watching. He is gazing off*)

LEOFRIC. (to BERTULF) Is he who helped you surely true?
BERTULF. Sullen

And gruff—but true, I take it.

(*Both look at GRIMBALD, who is conscious of their gaze*)
Godiva waits you there. (*going toward Hall*)

(*LEOFRIC, casting a glance after his men, goes quickly to Hall and exits*)

GRIMBALD. Do they suspect?
When gold is given the first-comer, why not I
A share? 'Twas hard to 'scape his glittering eyes.
If they search me—I'm to wait here—(*taking out
pouch of gold which jingles, he starts and looks
about*) Lie there

Awhile. (*hides bag under bench*) And just in time.
(*chuckling*)

Now search me, lord.

(*SEIGFRED disappears from arch at back*)

(*Enter BERTULF with LEOFRIC and GODIVA. She carries a golden pitcher in her hand*)

GODIVA. (to LEOFRIC) Lord, when you light the fire on
Bardon Hill

To-night, our wishes shall be flames.

LEOFRIC. Ay, lady,

(*Enter EADBURGA and ALFRED, her little son, running and crying at gate back*)

EADBURGA. Help! Help! Help!

GRIMBALD. Wife, what is it?

EADBURGA. We are
Left homeless, now. A troop of Danes—I choke
For breath—have burned our little home.

BERTULF. By Cuthbert!

Edric's Danes! Forth! forth. I'll see to it; go!

(*pointing off R.*)

GRIMBALD. Call out your carles, lord thegn, and punish
them.

BERTULF. (*angrily*) Go in!

(*GRIMBALD in sullen anger takes EADBURGA'S hand and goes off R.*)

(to LEOFRIC) Now, speed you, we must face this dog
With smiles. 'Twere madness to defy him now.

LEOFRIC. Farewell, my lord. To-night, the Saxon fire!

(Exit r.)

GODIVA. He did not say farewell to me.

BERTULF.

I like

It so. His heart is in his work.

(Exit to Hall)

GODIVA.

And yet

I would that he had not forgotten me.

(Goes to her bower)

I'll watch him ride forth, from the Manor tow'r.

(Exit)

(Enter RUNNION with JILLEN on his arm dancing in. He carries food in a napkin in one hand. GURTH follows them)

RUNNION. Ho! Ho! Ho! (singing) It's ho for the life....

GURTH. Look here, Rusty Runnion, I want the sermon you promised us when I let you kiss Jillen, the sermon on How a Swineherd May Marry a Goose-girl.

(AP-TOMAS appears from the door L. RUNNION stops suddenly)

RUNNION. Here's Ap-Tomas coming for his dinner. Most venerable old harper, I never got a pinch of food.

AP-TOMAS. You're a liar, and the son of a liar.

JILLEN. (laughing) That's fine. I thought he was an old saint.

AP-TOMAS. A skulking liar.

RUNNION. Here, I had it for you. (giving food in a napkin to AP-TOMAS, who goes off grumbling to door L. and exits)

GURTH. Now the sermon! The sermon! Marriage is the only cure for her.

RUNNION. Brethren, it's easier to marry than to be true; so marry; take a fool's advice. Steal a young pig, swineherd, and you goose-girl, steal a gander. Give them to Friar Dunstan by Bardon Hill, and he'll marry you, and then—little swineherds and little goose-girls all over the shire.

JILLEN. (snatching off RUNNION's cap and hitting him with it) Fie upon you! Fie upon you! (throws his cap so it falls by bench L. of tree)

GURTH. Come, Jillen! to the holy friar.

JILLEN. Nay, I fear to take a fool's advice.

GURTH. Oh, come! (*dragging her*) or I'll never get you married.

(*Exit, dragging JILLEN out at gate back. RUNNION laughs and capers*)

(*Re-enter AP-TOMAS carrying harp. It grows darker*)

AP-TOMAS. There's trouble brewing here, and a storm is gathering over there.

RUNNION. Then don't let us face the storm.

AP-TOMAS. We're better on the road.

RUNNION. No; where there's trouble, things are left about loose, and that's the chance for Rusty Runnion. My cap! She threw it this way. (*goes flat down on his belly to get it, starts up with the bag in one hand, the cap in the other. Manner suddenly changes to the ferocious furtive of the thief*) Here's something loose! God's blood! (*looks about*) Yes, there's trouble about. (*jingling the bag*) Come; come quick, old man. We'll face the storm. (*going up*)

AP-TOMAS. Let me see't.

RUNNION. Nay, softly and quick. (*breathless*) I'll sing:

(*Exit singing with AP-TOMAS out by arch at back. It darkens more, there is a sound of wind and a faint flash of lightning. Enter GRIMBALD, following is EADBURGA with little ALFRED by her hand*)

EADBURGA. Why leave the Manor now? We have no home.

All's gone, I tell you.

GRIMBALD. Hush! We've that will buy Another home. Cry out, if any come. (*goes to bench and feels under it*)

It's gone!

EADBURGA. What's gone?

GRIMBALD. My gold.

EADBURGA. What gold?

GRIMBALD. A curse.

On him who took it! They suspected me.

'Twas Bertulf himself that took it. Miser!

EADBURGA. Are you mad?

GRIMBALD. No; I'll have it; I'll have it. (*a flash of lightning and a peal of distant thunder*)

We must go now.

EADBURGA. In the storm?

GRIMBALD. Ay, in the storm,
(Noise of wind and storm at back, a roll of thunder nearer. A trumpet sounds as near the gate at back. Enter SIEGFRED from the arch quickly, he comes forward. Enter BERTULF from the Hall)

SIEGFRED. *(quickly)* 'Tis the Duke Edric.

BERTULF. Edric!

SIEGFRED. With a heavy guard.

GRIMBALD. *(with malignant joy)* Duke Edric!

EADBURGA. *(covering)* 'Twas his Danes who burned
 our home.

GRIMBALD. He'll get me back the gold!

BERTULF. *(to GRIMBALD)* You may be gone!

(GRIMBALD remains in sullen defiance. Enter EDRIC with OSWALD, RAGNAL and a dozen Danes)

BERTULF. All hail, Duke Edric! Will you enter in?

(SIEGFRED goes up steps to Hall)

EDRIC. Who were those horsemen riding west? Saxons?

BERTULF. Some friends of ours, my lord.

EDRIC. Of yours or mine?

Who heads them?

BERTULF. Eorl Leofric.

EDRIC. Questioning here?

BERTULF. He called in passing?

EDRIC. Not as suitor for

Your daughter's hand?

BERTULF. No lord.

EDRIC. You got my message.

BERTULF. Your captain brought your honored offer, lord.

EDRIC. Well, the answer.

BERTULF. I can tell you best within.

EDRIC. You can say "yes" or "no" without much breath.

BERTULF. It is too grave to answer with a word.

(SIEGFRED exits into Hall)

EDRIC. Must I listen to a graybeard homily?

What higher honor do you seek than place

Your daughter on a ducal throne beside

The king's?

BERTULF. Too high, perhaps, my lord.

EDRIC. Her fame

For gentle piety is just the touch

To grace my pow'r, for I'm no pious saint.

BERTULF. You would not take a bride unwilling, lord?

EDRIC. (*angry*) Unwilling? There's some other, then?
This Lord Leofric?

BERTULF. (*to GRIMBALD*) I have said you should be gone.

EDRIC. Why linger and smile, knave? Do you know aught?

BERTULF. He has some foolish prayer to make?

EDRIC. (*looking from one to the other*) Speak, knave!
Lord Leofric? And your lord's daughter? Speak!

GRIMBALD. He saw the lady, Duke.

EDRIC. Ha! Now!

GRIMBALD. And his quest
Was treason.

EDRIC. Treason?

GRIMBALD. He heads a new revolt.

EADBURGA. (*to BERTULF*) He has gone mad, my lord.

GRIMBALD. He gave him gold
From his great hidden store. Leofric's gone
To light a war-flame upon Bardon Hill.

BERTULF. Ingrate dog! whose life I spared.

(*EADBURGA exits wailing by gate at back*)

GRIMBALD. (*to EDRIC*) I can get
The gold that's left—for, a share, lord, a share.

EDRIC. (*to BERTULF*) A double traitor! Flouts my offer;
gives

The King's enemies gold. Ragnal take
Him in, and this good hang-dog with him.

(*RAGNAL and DANES seize BERTULF and GRIMBALD*)

GRIMBALD. A share!

EDRIC. Give him a dozen pieces for his news;
Then lash him for co-parceny in treason.

(*Guards take BERTULF and GRIMBALD into Hall*)

(*to his men*) Hus-carles! In there and hold all at
my orders.

(*Exeunt soldiers R.*)

A prosperous wooing!

(*GODIVA appears, on steps of bower. She conceals herself from EDRIC behind the latticework. She listens*)

OSWALD. Take the daughter now,
Lord Edric.

EDRIC. There is time enough for that;
Nor Bertulf; he's too old to trouble with.

But this Leofric! Take horse; ride after him.

OSWALD. To Bardon Hill?

EDRIC. To Bardon Hill; the fire
He lights shall be your signal to attack.

He must be taken.

OSWALD. He shall.

(GODIVA staggers, almost falls)

EDRIC. If there's much gold,
I'll take it with the girl by Gallows Pass
To Coventry.

(GODIVA sinks down on the steps. Taking OSWALD forward and speaking close to him)

Oswald, this revolt falls in
With my great plan, which can be best wrought out
Amid a broil. I'll have King Edmund slain
In London, and all England shall be ours.
I've sent a message to Canute which barely
Gives a hint of this, so that he'll know who
Is the builder of his fortunes. Come, the gold!

(Exit to Hall. Lightning and loud thunder. GODIVA struggles to her feet and comes feebly, stealthily down. A clash of weapons and of two quarreling voices off R. Enter CUTHWOLF, sword in hand. He looks back as if at a fallen foe, and is crossing L. hurriedly)

GODIVA. (calling low) Cuthwolf!

CUTHWOLF. Who called? My lady,
You should not be here.

GODIVA. Cuthwolf, we must ride
To Bardon Hill to save the Lord Leofric.
He's betrayed to Edric.

CUTHWOLF. Leave your lord father?

GODIVA. My father will be safe.

CUTHWOLF. I dare not take you.

GODIVA. Then, I go alone.

CUTHWOLF. No woman can take
The forest path—wild, rough and perilous.

GODIVA. I shall take it, then.

CUTHWOLF. For Saxon England?

Come, lady. I'll find horses.

GODIVA. Fast, fast steeds

For Saxon England and—the Lord Leofric!

(They hasten up to gate back as Danish soldiers enter from R. with two or three Saxon soldiers bound; the Hall door opens, BERTULF led out by EDRIC, OSWALD, GRIMBALD, RAGNAL, soldiers. Lightning, Thunder. Loud cries and shouts)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—On Bardon Hill. The scene should show the summit of a hill in Mid-England. It slopes away on the L. at back over a fertile rolling country with tracts of forest land, hills in distance. A road comes in rising to the stage level at L. 3. This road crosses the stage diagonally and goes off at R. 1. At C. back the hill rises by a sharp rocky acclivity to a narrow rocky crest on which is affixed an iron cresset mounted on a stout iron rod. On the L. bushes extend from R. 3, where the road enters, to the front. On the R., occupying the upper corner of the stage, a miniature Saxon Church or cell, whose door faces the stage. A small belfry on the little church. At R. 2 (that is, by the roadside), a large wooden cross socketed in a rough lichened block of limestone. A path leads by church off at back. The road and path are defined by grass, which covers the rest of the stage. A rude stone bench at L. C. Time, evening, toward sunset.

DISCOVERED.—KING CANUTE, JARL THOROLD, a guard of Danish soldiers, WILFRED, a Saxon messenger-picture. CANUTE is seated on the bench L. C. THOROLD is on his R. The messenger is standing back C. among the Danish soldiers, who are obviously guarding him. CANUTE is reading a scroll.

CANUTE. (striking letter with the back of his hand) This Edric has changed sides too often to

Be trusted. How did he know we'd pass this way?

THOROLD. The messenger, lord-king, says he was told
To ride to Peterboro'. So he chanced
To meet us.

CANUTE. (as if from letter) H'm. He brags and fawns
too much.

"Most sovereign king and over-lord, Canute."

H'm, he's going to marry Bertulf's daughter.

From all sides stories of his harshness come,
Making my rule so bitter it must breed

Revolt. (rising and laying his hand on THOROLD'S
shoulder) Thorold, these Saxons do not love us,

Yet I would win them rather than force them.

And now, read me this riddle. (handing scroll)

THOROLD.

This?

CANUTE. (pointing)

Read there.

THOROLD. (*reading*) "I would be prophet of your greater glory.

Edmund's thin thread of life once snipped in twain,
Canute becomes the King of England, North
And South." (*looking up*) That was the pact at
Olney.

CANUTE. Read on.
THOROLD. (*reading*) "I do not think that Edmund's life
will last

A week. At Coventry I shall remind you,
I've sent such message to a king before."

(THOROLD *shows he understands, but looks blankly at*
CANUTE)

CANUTE. Edmund's "thin thread?" Why he is lusty as
An English oak, strong as a Baltic storm. (*pause*)
What message does he mean?

THOROLD. (*quickly and in low tone*) The one he sent
To Ethelred when he had laid his plans
To murder the Northumbrian lords.

CANUTE. (*in disgust*) No, no!
It must not be. Such murder-plotters are
My enemies.

THOROLD. (*cunningly*) But Edmund is a greater.
Let Edric work—such reptiles have their uses.

CANUTE. No.

THOROLD. Then?

CANUTE. Send word to Edric that Canute
Forbids him...to fell timber in the forest
Of the king. He'll understand.

(*Goes aside and sits in thought*)

THOROLD. (*turns—smiles—beckons a soldier, who ad-
vances to him*) Sitric, I'll give yon Saxon a brief word
To carry to his lord. (*low tone*) And if he dies
Upon the road (*pointing off R.*) it will not go amiss.
I'll follow. (*soldier retires up. To the messenger*)
Go with them.

(*Messenger, preceded by two and followed by two sol-
diers goes R., pausing and kneeling at the cross and
then exits*)

(*to CANUTE*) Lord, I shall give
The message.

CANUTE. Very well.

THOROLD. (*aside and looking at CANUTE, who is still
brooding*) He hopes I will not.

Kings must have someone bold enough to stand
Between them and their consciences. So I'll
Let Edric work his murder-plot in peace.

CANUTE. We'll need a guide to Alstane's Manor.
 THOROLD. I'll

Return and look to that.

(Exit R.)

CANUTE. (*rises*) Then speedily—(*turns and looks over the landscape L.*)

Here England spreads its carpet for my feet—
 A land that's worth the lives of many kings.
 By Thor, this sun-kissed hill-top that the clouds
 Trail over with the touch of Valkyr wings,
 Gives golden uplift to a king's ambition. (*turning R.*)
 Yet here some pious follower of Him,
 Whom Satan on the hilltop failed to tempt,
 Finds it a place for humble pray'r. Who's right,
 The devil or the priest? With one I wish
 King Edmund death, and with the other life.
 And still the Fates—the three dim, spinning sisters—
 Will decide it all.

(*Enter by path R. at back CUTHWOLF and GODIVA. They come forward quickly. CANUTE turns abruptly. The Danish soldiers start alertly. GODIVA wears a peasant gown*)

GODIVA. It is not he?

CANUTE. Whom

Do you seek upon the hilltop?

(GODIVA *shrinks back*)

CUTHWOLF. Lord, a friend.

CANUTE. Who are you? A bondman and a soldier, I
 See that.

CUTHWOLF. A huscarle of Lord Bertulf's guard.

CANUTE. This maid?

CUTHWOLF. My sister, lord.

CANUTE. A dainty sister.

Speak girl! What friend did you expect to find?

GODIVA. You seem a Noble Dane, lord, Should you ask?

CANUTE. Question for answer. Woman's way, it seems,
 In England as in Norseland. Dane, you said.

Then, I divine you've tryst here with a Saxon.

GODIVA. Yes, lord Dane.

CANUTE. And does your business end in Church? (*pointing R.*)

GODIVA. 'Tis not for me to say, lord Dane.

CANUTE. That's true:

Men like to have the word on that. Tell me
 His name.

CUTHWOLF. His name's small matter, lord. A man
She hates would wed her, and we've come here, to ask
If Friar Dunstan will not wed her to
The man she likes.

GODIVA. No, lord, do not believe
All that. But since our... friend's not here, we'd go.

CANUTE. And come again? Well, come a step with me.

GODIVA. I must not.

CANUTE. Must not? I'm Canute, the king,
And I command.

GODIVA. Canute? Cuthwolf, the king!

CUTHWOLF. Forgive us, Majesty!

CANUTE. You know Lord Alstan's
Manor-house?

CUTHWOLF. Some two miles hence. (*pointing R.*)

CANUTE. Then set us
On the Alstane road, and come back hasting to
This friend.

GODIVA. May I not stay, lord King?

CANUTE. No, no.

You'll come with us, and tell us more of him.

GODIVA. I've told your lordship nothing.

CANUTE. I'll tell you
Something; you are not the sister of a thrall.

GODIVA. Soon, lord, 'twill be too dark to see the road.

CANUTE. (*to his men*) March on!

(*to GODIVA*) The king may envy one young Saxon
As we go. (*gives his hand to GODIVA, who exhibits
intense anxiety, at which CANUTE is amused*)

(*Two men exeunt, then CUTHWOLF follows. CANUTE and
GODIVA are about to follow. Chapel door opens, DUN-
STAN appears, and comes forward. GODIVA snatches
the reliquary from her bosom, runs and puts it in
DUNSTAN'S hand*)

GODIVA. This reliquary as a sign to him
That I'll return. Come, come, lord king.

CANUTE. Warm love
Most truly; Come!

(*Exeunt followed by two soldiers*)

DUNSTAN. Lord king? The Norseland king.

Canute! This Saxon reliquary and
For whom? For "him." They piled the cresset with
The resin-wood to-day. A new revolt!
What if they meet? The rebels and the king?
Death to Canute would mean all England to
King Edmund. Friar or not, I'm Saxon born.

(Goes R., as if to follow them, but halts before the Cross)

O Lord, forgive this murder in my heart.

(Kneels and prostrates himself before the Cross. A pause)

GURTH'S VOICE. (off R. at back) Come on, Jilleu. Come on.

JILLEN'S VOICE (off) Aw, Gurth, I'm afeard!

GURTH. (entering by path back of chapel and dragging JILLEN) Come on, I say. The Friar will marry you and make you an honest woman.

JILLEN. I'm honest enough, Gurth. I've never been so far on the road before. Is it always like that, fighting and killing? (looking back, frightened)

GURTH. (sardonically) No; it's just got up for you.

JILLEN. (taking out bag of gold) Let me look at it. (seeing DUNSTAN, screams) Another corpse. It's moving. (DUNSTAN rises)

GURTH. Hush, fool; it's the Friar. Good Father Dunstan...the...the pig has escaped.

JILLEN. (curtseying) And my gander, too. I dropped the gander when I saw the fighting, and I dropped the pig when I saw the dead man...

DUNSTAN. What pig; what gander; what fighting, what dead man?

GURTH. The pig and the gander were to be your meat, father.

JILLEN. (sobbing) I couldn't help it...the dead man...

GURTH. He was a two months pigling—a youngest son, a pet.

JILLEN. And a lovely gander; a father and a grandfather he was.

DUNSTAN. Fools! tell your story.

JILLEN. Oh, it's wonderful, wonderful.

GURTH. Good Father Dunstan, I want you to marry us. This goose-girl kisses every man she meets, and marriage is the only cure for that.

JILLEN. And I want to be cured, father.

GURTH. The gleeman told us to get married; so we stole the pig and the bird and took to the road.

JILLEN. We're Bertulf's thralls, father.

GURTH. The storm wet us to the skin, and we took shelter.

JILLEN. I was in a hurry to see you, father, and I made him come on.

GURTH. In the birch wood we came upon the Harper and the gleeman fighting. The pig broke loose and ran

between their legs. They ran as if the devil was after them.

JILLEN. I dropped the gander, but I caught the pig.

DUNSTAN. Will ever have done with the pig?

GURTH. And Jillen found this bag of jingling things where they were fighting.

JILLEN. Ay, and other things—great tufts of the harper's beard and the tail of the gleeman's cloak. Oh, 'twas fine.

DUNSTAN. Oh, ye fools, come to the dead man.

JILLEN. Oh, we went speedily on. We were coming to the dead man, but we didn't know it. I coveted to see what was in the bag.

GURTH. And I coveted, so we went into the laurel grove below this hill. We heard a jingle of harness on the road. We both lay still. They halted, and two great Danes with a Danish lord came driving a Saxon into the wood.

DUNSTAN. A Saxon!

JILLEN. I was frozen dead with fright.

GURTH. Two paces from us, they speared him dead.

DUNSTAN. And said nothing?

JILLEN. The Saxon shrieked "God's mercy!"

GURTH. The Danish Lord said to the dead man: "Now, let your Master Edric fell the oak in the forest of the king."

DUNSTAN. Was that all?

GURTH. Out on the road came other Danes, and there were high words and blame.

JILLEN. Then all went pit-a-pat down through the forest road.

(GURTH sits down and cuts the bag. The gold is seen)

DUNSTAN. "The forest of the king." You never spoke?

JILLEN. I dropped the pig, and a big Dane took him on his spear. Now, you won't marry us. *(weeps)*

GURTH. Is this gold, father?

DUNSTAN. It has the look of gold; it's gold.

JILLEN. Gold!

GURTH. How many of these are worth a suckling pig?

DUNSTAN. There's gold enough to have a cardinal marry your Lady Godiva to a prince; but it's stolen gold.

JILLEN. It's the Welsh harper's gold, and the Welsh make "fairy gold." It's "fairy gold" father.

DUNSTAN. It's stolen gold, I say.

GURTH. Then come and marry us, for the pig was stolen, too.

(A hunting horn is heard off L. at back)

DUNSTAN. Into the chapel and pray. And if I am delayed, you'll find some bread and cheese in the cupboard of my cell that's in the rock below.

JILLEN. Come and pray that he won't be long.

(They go in quickly, GURTH clutching the bag. DUNSTAN goes up L. and looks off)

DUNSTAN. More lovers! *(comes down)* The Saxon in the gorge below there, dead, unshriven. I'll go there. *(going R.)* Strange, Edric to cut down an oak in the forest of the king.

(The light is changing to sunset glow. DUNSTAN exits quickly R. at back. Enter LEOFRIC, leading the LADY WYNFREDA)

WYNFREDA. It is. I do insist, most strange and full
Of omen that we meet on Bardon Hill.

LEOFRIC. Not strange when your good father's Manor lies
So close, and I bent thither. 'Tis not strange
That you go hawking.

WYNFREDA. You would rob a woman
Of the signs and omens that she loves to find
In all that has to do with man.

LEOFRIC. I'd see
Your father.

WYNFREDA. Leofric, it is meet you'd first
See me. *(laughs and curtseys)*

LEOFRIC. Wynfreda, 'tis no jest. I'm here
To set King Edmund on all England's throne.

WYNFREDA. *(mockingly)* I thought 'twas settled that the
King Canute—

A young and handsome Dane, they say—should reign
In this half-England. Now, another war!
I've sent my father, fierce a Saxon as
He is, to seek the new king's favor.

LEOFRIC. He?

WYNFREDA. Oh, 'tis most stale and dull in these gray
shires

To one who's seen the show and glow of courts.

LEOFRIC. Your father is at York?

WYNFREDA. There is welcome still
For you, Leofric. Forget this rebel mood.

(Enter HUNDIBERT L. at back)

HUNDIBERT. My lord,
The gold is safe with Wilfred, and we wait
The signal—*(stops, seeing WYNFREDA)*

LEOFRIC. Guard the valley road and let
Me know if friend or foe approach.

HUNDIBERT. Ay, lord.

(Exit L.)

WYNFREDA. This madness is well underway—a signal?

LEOFRIC. When Melton Abbey rings the vesper bell,
The flame from there (*pointing to cresset*) will rouse
all Mercia.WYNFREDA. (*in anger*) Ha!
(*softly*) Leofric, there is still an hour to weigh
Your life. I may seem light of heart and love,
But you know well that I. . . (*sits on bench*)LEOFRIC. (*approaching her*) You'd best be gone.
Our ways will be apart, I fear.WYNFREDA. Do you
Remember one September night like this?*(Enter GODIVA R. I. She is tired, but fighting her fatigue. She is about to advance, and seeing LEOFRIC is about to speak, but seeing WYNFREDA with him, she staggers back to the cross, and sinks upon the stone at its foot)*We floated on the king's barge down the Thames—
A flood of moonlight on the stream—'mid harp
And song that made the air one minstrelsy.

LEOFRIC. I was then mere boy.

WYNFREDA. Our eyes had lingered on
Each other, and our hands, once touched, had clasped
In shadow by our sides. Was not life sweet
That night?*(Enter CUTHWOLF, he sees GODIVA, then LEOFRIC. GODIVA makes a gesture of command that he go forward. CUTHWOLF advances. GODIVA watches intently)*CUTHWOLF. My lord, the Danes are on your track.
I'm of Lord Bertulf's huscarles, and I know.WYNFREDA. (*rising*) Renounce this madness! At Al-
stane's Manor you'll
Be safe.LEOFRIC. (*to CUTHWOLF*) What more?WYNFREDA. (*pointing to cross*) Some shape of woman's
there.CUTHWOLF. One braving all, my lord, in England's cause.
(*GODIVA startles as if about to flee*)LEOFRIC. A woman! (*goes quickly to GODIVA*) Lady
Godiva! (*leading her tenderly to c., she weak and reluctant*)WYNFREDA. Oho!
In England's cause? Thegn Bertulf's only daughter!
My Lord Leofric, you are nobly served—
In England's cause!

LEOFRIC. (*tenderly to GODIVA*) How came it, lady, that
Thro' storm, and forest paths you came yourself
And did not send?

GODIVA. (*feebly*) I had done as well to send,
My lord; but, being here, I'd tell you *not*
To light the signal-flame.

WYNFREDA. (*satirically*) God's mercy, she
Is of my mind. Thinks more of your cause than
Of England's.

GODIVA. Not lady, of your mind, although
I tell him not to start a fire will bring
Duke Edric's hounds about him. I'm not craven.

WYNFREDA. Your convent dreams have not forbid the
seed
Of love to flower rankly. Fy!

GODIVA. Oh, lady!

LEOFRIC. (*to WYNFREDA*) Surely, you should not mock
her thus,
If, in her love of England, she's of help
To me.

GODIVA. I would not that anyone should think
It otherwise. I have some words of warning
For you; then I must be gone. A mile
Beyond the Alstane road, Duke Edric's carles
Lie watching for a flame.

(*WYNFREDA starts and clenches her hands at hearing this*)

Come, Cuthwolf, we'll

Go back.

LEOFRIC. No; on my soul, you shall not ere
I thank you in the name of Saxon England.
Rest for a little space; you're tired and weak. (*seat-
ing her on bench*)

GODIVA. (*showing an inner delight at his words*) My
lord, I've done small service.

(*Enter DUNSTAN R. at back. He bears a sword. He comes
forward, dropping the sword near the cross, on seeing
the group*)

DUNSTAN. Lord Leofric.

WYNFREDA. Good Dunstan, come with me as far as where
My falconers await.

DUNSTAN. Would you go now?

WYNFREDA. These lovers...of Saxon England have
some...thanks
To interchange.

DUNSTAN. (*seeing GODIVA*) This reliquary, maiden,
That you gave me! Was't for him? (*handing it to
her*)

WYNFREDA. Love-tokens?

GODIVA. My thanks.

WYNFREDA. Come Friar! They best had speed their
wooing.

(*to LEOFRIC*) Not a word to stay Wynfreda? No,
not one;

But stand there dumb before this rustic hoyden.

LEOFRIC. Lady Wynfreda!

WYNFREDA. (*mockingly*) Trust me these convent maids!
(*fiercely*) The arrow with a goose's feather may
Fly fast and far, but I know something swifter.

We'll see. Come, priest, they will not need your
pray'rs.

(*Exit quickly R. 1, followed by DUNSTAN, who looks a-
wondering from GODIVA to LEOFRIC. CUTHWOLF follows
them off as watching them. LEOFRIC takes a step after
her, then halts and turns quickly to GODIVA*)

GODIVA. I would not cause the lady anger. I had
No choice, but rudely break upon your soft
Remembrances. I would I had not seen
Or heard. My lord, I never was at Court,
Nor longed for it. You will forgive me if
The lady will not.

LEOFRIC. Forgive you? These poor clothes,
These sandals tattered on the mountain stones,
To bear a saving word to me!

GODIVA. The storm
O'ertook and drenched us, and Cuthwolf brought me
To his sister's house, who gave me this dry gown.
Do not think of it again.

(*Looks at reliquary, which is still in her hand, and starts*)

LEOFRIC. (*following her glance*) The Friar said
You gave him that—your Edward's reliquary!

GODIVA. Yes, for a sign—I said "for him." I did
Not dare to breathe your name.

LEOFRIC. Not dare?

GODIVA. The king,
Canute was by; was there

LEOFRIC. Canute, and here?

GODIVA. 'Tis swiftly told. We reached this spot before
Your coming, and came upon the king with men
About him. He questioned us. But for the wit
Of Cuthwolf I had betrayed myself; he said

I was his sister. Despite my rough attire,
The King suspected I was not a thrall.

LEOFRIC. (*flaming up*) Did he then treat you with a scant
respect?

GODIVA. He was courteous, as a king might be. He named
Himself and bade us show the way to Alstane.

LEOFRIC. Is he there?

GODIVA. No; half-way there a murder-cry
Rang out. The king had bitter speech with one
He called Jarl Thorold about the man they slew,
Who was, it seems, a messenger of Edric's.
Then asked us for the road to Coventry,
And so dismissed us.

LEOFRIC. Canute, so near our grasp
To Coventry? Well, now we know where first
To strike.

GODIVA. Not there. My brain whirls so. My tale's
Not told. Duke Edric sought my hand in marriage.
Came to our Manor suddenly, and, guided
By a traitor, took the gold that still remained.
Then sent a force to take you when you light
The flame. Edric himself will meanwhile go
By Gallows Pass, the gold in charge. I thought
You might pounce on him there.

LEOFRIC. A bold device.
I'll do it out of hand.

(*GODIVA reels and is about to fall; LEOFRIC catches her and
leads her to the bench.*)

LEOFRIC. Brave girl!

GODIVA. I overheard them. . . . came. . . . that's all.
Came. . . . for our Saxon cause. I kept on telling
Myself that, as on we stumbled thro' the forest,
Lest I'd turn back to be beside my father.
But I'd heard Duke Edric say, my father was
Too old to trouble with. . . . His villain words
Brought me strange comfort, as we journeyed on.

LEOFRIC. Your poor hand trembles so. I'll fetch some
water
From the spring.

GODIVA. Do not leave me, lord, a cloud
Of war seems gathering around this hill.
I shall be stronger soon. (*withdraws her hand*)
'Twill soon be night.

(*Enter CUTHWOLF R. I.*)

CUTHWOLF. The harper and the gleeman come afoot.
Shall I let them pass?

LEOFRIC. Yes, so they linger not.

(CUTHWOLF *exits.*)

GODIVA. They made gay music for us in the morning.
Now it is another song. (*they stand aside L.*)

(*The voice of RUNNION trolling a merry lay is heard indistinctly at first and growing louder. Enter RUNNION, followed by the harper. They are crossing the stage. RUNNION stops singing and halts*)

AP-TOMAS. There's no luck in a chapel on a hill, when the sun is set.

RUNNION. I find good luck wherever I find meat. You tore my coat for luck.

AP-TOMAS. You plucked my beard for deviltry.

RUNNION. I left you some for luck. A bard without a beard would spoil our little strolling company.

AP-TOMAS. I'm hungry, RUNNION, and I'd like some cold roast mutton.

RUNNION. Well, play your old harp and dream you're eating lamb. (*going.*) Come on; it's a long trot to Coventry.

AP-TOMAS. Will we rest on the other slope?

RUNNION. Ay, and when we have emptied our bread-sack, I'll spend the gold that you lost while you play "The Song of King Alfred's Dinner."

AP-TOMAS. There's not much bread in the sack.

(*Exeunt L. at back.*)

(*GODIVA on the bench has remained crouched and staring dreamily. As they go off she rises painfully and staggers back again. Moonlight begins to flood the scene and stars begin to glimmer*)

LEOFRIC. Let me call Cuthwolf; he will bring you water.

GODIVA. I drank at the spring where it babbles by
The path (*rising.*) I must go home. There, in
His rifled house my father waits, if haply
(*with sudden terror*) Edric did not slay him, or hold
him fast.

My place is there.

LEOFRIC. Your noble father.

GODIVA. All

I can do here is done. New strength will come
To me with every step that brings me home.
Farewell.

LEOFRIC. Not farewell.

GODIVA. Your place is where your cause
Commands. You stand for England in my eyes.
I would not have you take one step aside
For me; not more than for that Lady whom
You loved.

LEOFRIC. She's nothing in my thought.

GODIVA. (*the harp is heard playing a love melody*) Not
now,
But long ago, she said.

LEOFRIC. I never knew
What love is till to-day.

GODIVA. (*between hope and fear.*) To-day?

LEOFRIC. I am
A soldier bred to fight, and this glad morning
When you told of Elfled, the king's daughter,
My soul was stirred to war—as if I heard
A trumpet sound across a blood-red sea;
But in the stillness of the forest ways
I found another joy.

GODIVA. (*fiercely*) Wynfreda!

LEOFRIC. (*strongly.*) Nay,
I do not love her, never did.

GODIVA. (*with sudden gleam, but speaking fearfully*) You
found
Another joy?

LEOFRIC. (*tenderly.*) Your face, your spirit came
To me, and I loved. Godiva,
One small word!

GODIVA. I—cannot, I know not. Lord,
I must be gone. Call Cuthwolf, it grows dark.

LEOFRIC. I'll go with you.

GODIVA. You must not—now—not now.

LEOFRIC. (*quickly.*) You came forbidding me to light the
flame.

Why, at the first tap of the Abbey bell,
I can fire it, and escape.

GODIVA. No, no,
I'd die of terror at that risk.

LEOFRIC. (*strongly.*) No risk
To the Saxon cause.

GODIVA. (*with all her soul*) No, Leofric! No!
Not for all Saxon England!

LEOFRIC. Godiva!
You love me, you love me!

(*taking her hands*) The dear, sweet love
That takes us unawares.

GODIVA. (*withdrawing her hand.*) The jealous stars
Are stealing out to end our happiness. (*pressing her
hands to her bosom*)

LEOFRIC. Their eyes have never looked thro' clearer depths
Of joy. (*stretching out his hands to her*)

GODIVA. (*drawing forth the reliquary and extending it to
him between her hands, which are closed as in
prayer*) On the gold and the saintliness
Of this dear relic let us plight our troth.

LEOFRIC. (*reverently kissing it.*) Your voice sounds
sweeter than the vesper song. (*as she is kissing
the reliquary*)

GODIVA. (*starting from him—the harp sound ceases.*)
Than vesper-song; it's on the hour, and here
We madly linger.

LEOFRIC. (*taking his neck-scarf.*) Wear this then for our
Trulofa; the sign that I'm forever yours.

GODIVA. Leofric. (*putting it to her breast*)

(*Enter CUTHWOLF and DUNSTAN R. I.*)

CUTHWOLF. Lord, you must begone. Speak,
father.

DUNSTAN. The Lady Wynfreda means you ill. She's gone
Alone to where the Danes await the flame.
She'll bid them come without awaiting it.

GODIVA. She heard me tell you not to set the fire.

LEOFRIC. Give me a torch, Friar, and I'll light their way.

DUNSTAN. That were vain boasting, lord.

GODIVA. You must
away. (*pointing L. at back*)

(*Enter HUNDIBERT L. at back with four Saxons*)

HUNDIBERT. Leofric, a small band of Danes are on
The road below.

LEOFRIC. We can break through them.

GODIVA. No;
There is a safe way by the path I came
(*pointing R. at back*) Thro' Charnwood Forest!

LEOFRIC. It takes us from our goal.
But is it safe for you?

DUNSTAN. None know it but
The forest-bred, like Cuthwolf.

LEOFRIC. (*to GODIVA.*) Then 'tis yours,
With this brave man to guide.

CUTHWOLF. And guard with life,
My lord.

LEOFRIC. With you safe sped, we'll dash through
these
Few Danes.

THE SAXONS. (*in fierce assent.*) Ay! Ay!

GODIVA. (*to HUNDIBERT.*) They are not many spears?

HUNDIBERT. No, lady.

GODIVA. (*after a pause, lifting her eyes to the cresset and her face suddenly lighting with a strong inspiration*) Then, Godspeed, my lord. Come,

Brave Cuthwolf, come. (*as if her will fails suddenly*)

. . . . Oh, no; I cannot go.

LEOFRIC. Then I remain.

DUNSTAN. Go, lady.

GODIVA. (*recovering herself.*) Yes, I'll go.

LEOFRIC. (*Xing to her*) Speed, dearest; here's my work at hand.

GODIVA. Farewell,

Leofric.

LEOFRIC. Blessings and godspeed, my love!

CUTHWOLF. Come, lady.

(*Exeunt l. at back, CUTHWOLF leading GODIVA, who looks back lovingly at LEOFRIC*)

LEOFRIC. (*after a pause, watching her off and coming resolutely forward.*) Friar, a torch!

DUNSTAN. Why call your foes,
And risk all for a flash of flame?

LEOFRIC. You're right,

Yet Mercia is awaiting it. I'd give
Half life to fire it at the vesper bell.
And see the hills upblazing in reply.

HUNDIBERT. Should we delay, lord?

THE SAXONS. No!

LEOFRIC. (*going to DUNSTAN—tenderly.*) I'd have you
watch

For her.

DUNSTAN. In fifty paces she was safe.

Go forth, assured.

LEOFRIC. (*turning resolutely.*) Now softly down the road
Till I cry "Edmund"; then your swords!

(*The Saxons pass out l. at back with HUNDIBERT, LEOFRIC draws his sword Watch, father. Follows swiftly off. DUNSTAN extends his hands in blessing, turns, goes forward; takes up the dead Saxon's sword*)

DUNSTAN. The murdered Saxon's sword! Now Danes
will die.

This awful silence on the brink of war. (*lays it down on cross pedestal. Crosses himself and enters the chapel in which presently appears a dim light showing through the windows. Stage darkens with the effect of a cloud on the face of the moon*)

GODIVA. (*suddenly appearing at back—R.—she is dishevelled, breathless, as from climbing, her upper garment completely torn, showing the white of her chemise almost from the waist up.*) I'll not be stayed; don't touch me!

CUTHWOLF. (*appearing.*) Nay, I must.

GODIVA. (*rushing forward—seeing sword.*) A sword! Stand off. The Lord Leofric said That Mercia watches longing for the flame From Bardon Hill. He's gone to strike her foes. I'll light the signal fire. (*rushes past CUTHWOLF and clambers lightly up the rocky summit. She peers down over the road L. at back.*) I cannot see them.

CUTHWOLF. My lady, I am sworn your guard. You shall Not writhe away from me again. (*is about to ascend when chapel door opens quickly and DUNSTAN appears*)

DUNSTAN. (*seeing CUTHWOLF.*) What do You here? And Lady Godiva?

(*Stage lightens as with moonlight again, still looking off L.*)

Ah see.

I catch the glint of steel. Their spears flash up. They're charging! There! For God and Saxon England!

They've broken through. The Lord Leofric at Their head. Well done! Well done!

CUTHWOLF. Now come, my lady.

GODIVA. No; first a torch, or here I stay till fire From Heaven comes.

DUNSTAN. (*loudly.*) Lady Godiva; no! (*the vesper bell sounds slowly as far off*)

GODIVA. Hear it! The vesper bell, the vesper bell! A torch! A torch, I say.

JILLEN. (*torch in hand, entering quickly from the chapel and clambering a step or two up the rocks.*) Here, lady!

GODIVA. (*reaching down.*) Jillen! Here! (*takes torch and puts it to cresset which blazes up*) Now, England, blaze! JILLEN descends and stands at side appalled. *A clank of steel off R.*)

CUTHWOLF. The Danes! (*Enter OSWALD, RAGNAL and a force of Danes.*)

OSWALD. Surrender! Take that woman alive!

(The Danes charge on CUTHWOLF, who slays the first. The rest overbear him, throwing him to the ground, RAGNAL standing over him. OSWALD clammers up on her R. Some spearmen on her L. Lights begin to appear on the hills around)

GODIVA. The hills are blazing; England is in arms.
He's safe! I fear you not. Take me! Take me!

TABLEAU—CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Chapter Room of the Convent of St. Michael the Archangel. It is of Gothic architecture, oblong as far forward as 2, where it turns R. and L., clustered columns at the angles running up to the groined ceiling; stained glass windows of geometrical design high up the walls at the sides. At back a rose window of stained glass. In the window on the bend L. a life-size stained glass figure of St. Michael, the Archangel bearing a sword. (It is practical to open inward on a hinge.) In the corresponding bend R. a niche with statue of the Virgin, before which burns a small red chancel lamp. Midway of the wall L. a one-step dais on which stands a heavy ecclesiastical throne or chair. To the R. of the chair (and on the dais) a small table covered with a white altar cloth. On this table at back stands an ebony and ivory crucifix. Towards the front of the table the coffer containing the web given by GODIVA. At upper front corner of dais a great candlestick of brass on which are three lighted candles. Over the dais a stone canopy braced to the wall. Before the window at L. 1 an oblong old-oak table with a couple of large scarlet-bound books with heavy clasps upon it. A mediæval stool to R. of table. Entrances, a large double door at back, showing a passage when opened, also a draped entrance at R. 2. It is night coming toward morning. The stage is dark when the curtain rises except for the candles near the dais and the red dot of light in the lamp before the Virgin's statue.*

DISCOVERED.—*The ABBESS EDELGITHA seated in the chair L., her hands joined in prayer. Voices of nuns R. and back to low organ accompaniment. The voices cease and a low voluntary continues on the organ.*

ABBESS. (*solemnly laying her hand on the coffer*) Thrice blessed for the dead; thrice blessed for the dead! My winding sheet, my winding sheet, O Lord!

(*Opening the lid and slowly drawing out the web, which as she speaks the following lines she passes from right hand to left until some of it touches the floor on her left. The light steals up a little, just sufficient to show the architectural outlines of the room*)

It came from the hands of the sweet and pure,
The flower that bloomed in these convent walls,
From the fair Godiva, the gift of Heaven.

(Rising with arms upraised and hands held apart, the web curving between and falling on either side. The organ sounds a little fuller)

Woven of prayers and dreams, be it blessed
In St. Edmund's name; my shroud, my winding sheet
Till the Judgment day. *(clasping it to her breast and
sinking back into the chair—the organ ceases)*

(Enter at back SISTER ANGELINE, a young nun. She carries a flambeau. Lights raised a little. A faint light comes through the stained glass windows)

ANGELINE. *(advancing.)* Mother; it is almost dawn; it will be a bright day for the feast of St. Michael the Archangel. *(approaching the ABBESS.)* Oh, the beautiful web; and must it, must it be kept for your shroud?

ABBESS. *(putting it back in coffer.)* Ay, sister, consecrated to the dead.

ANGELINE. It seems a pity, Holy Mother; it might be the veil of a mortal bride.

ABBESS. The dead are brides and grooms of immortality.

ANGELINE. When Sister Agatha and I opened the great gate of the convent, people already were astir. There were glad cries in the streets. A gleeman went by singing a merry song. Then came a loud clatter of horsemen. It will be, they say, the gayest Michelmas ever known to Coventry.

(The web is now replaced and the lid of the coffer closed)

ABBESS. Go, little chatterer; the pomp and pride
Of worldly pleasuring should never pass
The convent gate.

ANGELINE. *(turning to go up.)* But the gleeman's song,
mother,

(ABBESS rises and steps down from dais, ANGELINE giving her a hand)

Came like a flock of birds about our ears.

(Enter suddenly at back OSWALD. ANGELINE starts; the ABBESS turns)

OSWALD. We'd lodge a prisoner of Duke Edric's here.

ABBESS. This is no prison of Lord Edric's, sir.

You are, I see, a Northman, one of Edric's.

Learn, then, a higher Lord rules here.

OSWALD. You'll lodge
This prisoner; she has lodged here before.

(Goes up, throws open double door, a rosy morning glow is seen in the corridor; goes out and raises his hand beckoning R. and re-entering, going R. C.)

ANGELINE. Who can it be, Mother?

ABBESS. Wait, sister, wait!

(Two Danish guards appear from R. at back; they pass by the door—then GODIVA appears. She is more disheveled and ragged even than at close of second act. She is suffering from cold and fright)

OSWALD. *(to GODIVA.)* Come; this is your jail till Lord Edric comes.

(GODIVA shivers and looks timorously R. and L., but does not stir)

OSWALD. Bring her, or shall I drag you?

(The two soldiers from L. of door and two more from R. of door, close in behind her. One touches her with his hand. She shrinks from the touch, and comes in a few steps. ANGELINE has gone toward her, and holds the torch near her face)

ANGELINE. 'Tis Godiva!
Lady Godiva!

(GODIVA looks an instant at ANGELINE, then sees the ABBESS, who has drawn back in surprise and pain. GODIVA gives a low, hunted cry and runs forward, kneeling at the feet of the ABBESS and clinging to her robe, L. C.)

GODIVA. Mother, dearest Mother!

ABBESS. It is you, indeed. How comes it. . . this attire
In rags, these road-stained feet, this pallid face,
And these fierce men, who call you prisoner?

GODIVA. Oh Mother, I am cold, I am cold. First
Warm me, warm my heart, before you bid me tell.

OSWALD. She's ever some excuse for sullen silence.

ABBESS. This is a noble lady, not a base-born churl.
Why this indignity upon her? Rise,
My child; be comforted.

OSWALD. 'Tis her own doing,
She is held for treason to our lord, the King,
And bides here till Lord Edric comes. 'Twill not
Be long. Duke Edric will decree her doom.

GODIVA. I do not fear them, Mother; do not fear
For me. I shiver, I am very cold.

ABBESS. Northman, you've given her sanctuary. Here
Within these holy walls,
(*taking GODIVA to her breast*) no duke, no king
Shall harm or drag her forth.

OSWALD. (*coarsely mocking.*) Ha, we have now
A Danish king, Canute, who'll let no cross
Bar up his way. We burned cathedrals not
So long ago, and Edric's of our mind.
We're here to take her out at will.

ABBESS. Blasphemer!
(*to GODIVA.*) Come, child, by the fire, and tell me
what it means.

OSWALD. (*to the guards.*) Keep her in sight; follow!
(*Crossing with her R., ANGELINE preceding them, exits R.*
ABBESS and GODIVA *exunt R.* *The guards follow them*
off)

OSWALD. (*to the other two.*) You watch without.

(*The guards turn to go up as Enter Edric*)

OSWALD. My lord!

EDRIC. Your lord? Yes, I. Your prisoner?
Is it Leofric?

OSWALD. No, lord, he had warning
And escaped.

EDRIC. Escaped? Warning? Who could ride
Faster than you rode? Who knew your errand?

OSWALD. (*savagely.*) My
Prisoner.

EDRIC. In the name of hell, who is he? Speak.

OSWALD. (*sullenly.*) No man; a woman: the Lady Go-
diva.

EDRIC. The Lady Godiva! . . . that . . . girl! . . .
Ha! Ha!

You rave, you dream.

OSWALD. Except by witchcraft, it is
Not to say how she flew thither: but there
On Bardon Hill she was, firing the signal,
And crying "He is safe."

EDRIC. Go, bring her here.

OSWALD. First let me tell you that your messenger
To King Canute is slain, and slain by Danes,
They say.

EDRIC. By Danes. . . I'll not believe it. Yet,
If 'tis so, he reached the King, who has my letter,
(*sneering grimly*)

Telling him that Edmund's days are numbered.
 Killed my messenger? That means the king gives sly
 Consent, but washes his hands of it, and must
 Have silence on it. . . . Well, I'll keep straight on.
(suddenly.) Leofric's still at large?

OSWALD. Mercia is
 rising

At his call. . . . A signal on every hill.

EDRIC. We'll quench their fires in blood. . . . we've done't
 before.

OSWALD. *(eagerly.)* Has the gold we took come safe?

EDRIC. I sent it

By Gallows Pass in care of my stoutest carles;
 And came here. . . . bringing Bertulf.

OSWALD. I have some
 Prisoners besides, a soldier and a pair
 Of filthy thralls.

EDRIC. Bring in the girl.

OSWALD. She would

Not speak.

EDRIC. I'll make her speak; leave her to me.

Send her, and then ride fast as horse can go
 To Stafford Stone. There, you should meet a . . .
 monk,

And if he moans and cries "King Edmund's dead."
 Ride back and tell me. It will be our stroke
 Of Fortune. So, ride fast.

OSWALD. *(going R.)* At your word, my lord.

EDRIC. I've thrown a lure to bring King Canute here.

But since they've slain my messenger, it's like
 He will not come. Yet bring the news, and I
 Shall find the king. Go. . . . send the girl.

(Exit OSWALD R.)

(going forward.)

I'll crush

This new revolt, but crush Leofric first,
 Who'd stand between me and Godiva! Hush!

(Enter at the door R. the ABBESS. She carries a silver extinguisher. EDRIC starts toward her, but halts)

ABBESS. *(coldly.)* Lord Duke!

EDRIC. *(mock courtesy.)* Most holy mother, I had sent
 For a fair young rebel, and I think that you,
 Altho' attractive to the angels, scarcely
 Answer that prescription.

ABBESS. *(by the chair L.)* Lord, have a care.
 There is an angel with a sword.

EDRIC. (*looking up at window L., which is now lighted up by the daylight without, low tone.*) Ha, Michael!

(*From this on lights raised to daylight gradually*)

ABBESS. (*going to the table and extinguishing the candles one by one*) As one by one these lights are quenched, think thrice
Before you tempt the angel with the sword.

(*The organ sounds far off. . . . a bell rings in the convent. EDRIC has an instant of superstitious fright. Enter by the door R., Lady GODIVA. She is not so disheveled, and as if her torn garments had been hastily pinned together. She is stronger, but the strain shows in her nervous watchfulness. She stands R. C. The guards enter after her*)

EDRIC. (*recovering himself.*) Fair lady!

(*Signals to the guards to be gone. They move toward the door at back*)

ABBESS. Lord Edric.

(*GODIVA starts and turns a look at once startled and defiant at EDRIC*)

As your mother was
A woman, treat this lady not ungently.

(*Exit to GODIVA*)

EDRIC. (*false courtesy.*) Have no fear; she has her treatment in her own
Fair hands.

GODIVA. Good mother, ask this lord no favor.
Not for me.

EDRIC. (*mocking.*) Ah, very proud.

GODIVA. (*to ABBESS.*) But pray for me.

(*The ABBESS bows her head and exits.*)

EDRIC. Pray for us all: pray that this fair young saint
Be merciful. . . . unto herself.

(*to the guards.*) Await,
Without.

(*The guards exeunt at back. GODIVA watches them depart*)

Now, lady, will you have mercy on
Yourself? They tell a tale about you, not
To a maiden's credit. . . . But yesterday
I asked your father for your hand; to-day,
It seems you are unworthy of that honor.

GODIVA. Honor? I, my lord, could not esteem it so.

EDRIC. So then, it's true that not alone you flung
This honor back at me, but fled at once
To a rebel lord. . . . a traitress and a wanton.

GODIVA. (*shocked.*) Ah! I must be strong: I must not
fear him.

EDRIC. Ha!
You shrink at that.

GODIVA. I am not used to such
Rude speech.

EDRIC. (*false courtesy*) The nuns are nicer in their words:
(*fiercely.*) But all their teaching did not cool your
blood.

GODIVA. (*aroused.*) My lord, if I stand pris'ner. . . . in
your power here,
And you are base enough to shape the words
That shame a woman, you shall not think me
Coward as yourself.

EDRIC. Coward? Coward?

GODIVA. No brave man yet in all the world has stooped
To stab a woman, pure of heart, with that
Word. . . . wanton.

EDRIC. But when herself has burned the
brand
Upon her, as you with Lord Leofric. . . .

(GODIVA starts angrily.)

See,

You tremble at his name.

GODIVA. With anger, lord.
He is so great at heart, so true, so brave,
That but to hear his name upon your lips
Is profanation.

EDRIC. You shall hear't again
And again, before an hour is gone. His life
Is forfeit. You'd best iook to't to save your own.
For soon or late I'll have him in my hands.
Make terms with me, and it shall count for you.

GODIVA. I have naught to say to serve your purpose, or. . .
To save my life.

EDRIC. We'll see. (*going up*) Ho, there:
bring in
The others taken with this. . . . girl.

(GODIVA goes forward R. and turns, looking anxiously at
the door back. The double door flung open. Enter
guards with GURTH and JILLEN, EADBURGA and little
ALFRED—the latter stay by the door R.—then RAGNAL)

EDRIC. (*to RAGNAL.*) Who are they?

(*GURTH and JILLEN pushed forward.*)

RAGNAL. Two of Bertulf's thralls, my lord, a swineherd
And a goose-girl.

EDRIC. Your fit companions, lady?

JILLEN. Aw, my lady! my lady! I was afeard the
bloody Danes had killed you.

(*going toward GODIVA—stopped by EDRIC*)

EDRIC. Back, filthy thrall.

JILLEN. (*going to GURTH, who is R. C.*) Who is he,
Gurth, that calls me names?

GURTH. I dunno, Jillen, so they don't cuff us, we'll
hold our clappers.

EDRIC. You went with this woman to Bardon Hill?

GURTH. She's no woman; that's our lady.

EDRIC. You went with her?

JILLEN. Naw; we wouldn't dare; we went to get mar-
ried—Gurth and I.

GURTH. And we were niver married, for all we were
hours in the chapel.

EDRIC. You saw her with Leofric, the traitor.

JILLEN. Naw, never.

GURTH. It's not Leofric the traitor, great lord—it's
Edric the traitor.

EDRIC. Blood and wounds, knave, I am Edric. You dare
say that to my face?

GURTH. Jillen, he'll skin us alive, and we shan't be mar-
ried after all. (*drawing back R.*)

(*Enter at back LADY WYNFREDA. GODIVA, who has been
watching the scene facing up stage, on seeing WYN-
FREDA enter, turns front, clenches her hands, and draws
herself up*)

EDRIC. I'll know the truth if I must kill you all.

(*seeing WYNFREDA*) The Lady Wynfreda! Hail,
Lady!

WYNFREDA. (*bowing*) Lord Duke,
I've come from Alstane Manor. I've heard
You've taken Lord Leofric prisoner.

(*GODIVA starts and turns suddenly*)

GODIVA. It's not true. You betrayed him, but he's free.

WYNFREDA. And you are the prisoner? God a-mercy,
Let me laugh.

EDRIC. She denies all knowledge of
Leofric.

WYNFREDA. She gave him her father's gold;
 She shares his hopes; she knows his plans. What else
 She is to him, I'll leave unsaid.

GODIVA. Say all.
 You can say no more than this caitiff lord.

WYNFREDA. This to you, my lord. Make her speak; she'll
 tell
 To save her life. She came to Bardon Hill,
 A single soldier with her. They know where he
 He has gone.

EDRIC. Where is the soldier?

GODIVA. Brave Cuthwolf.

EDRIC. He shall lead my men to Leofric's tryst.

RAGNAL. He will not lead, lord; we smote him in the
 fight.

My brother Rollo struck out both his eyes. (*going
 up to door back*)

JILLEN. Oh, Cuthwolf's eyes!

GURTH. They had me down, too, in the chapel; but they
 didn't take my eyes.

JILLEN. I gave them handfuls of the fairy gold.

GURTH. It must be a great thing that gold.

JILLEN. Look!

(*Enter two Danes, leading in CUTHWOLF, who is blinded,
 a bandage about his eyes. He is led forward.*)

GODIVA. (*rushing to him*) Oh, valiant Saxon; this cruel
 loss for me.

CUTHWOLF. Dear lady, since I hear your voice, I am
 Repaid...tho' the burning pain is hard to bear.

WYNFREDA. (*to EDRIC*) It would be vain to torture him
 since he

Is blind; but she who flouts you, who refused
 You...Ah, you see I've heard it...Make her feel
 A little burning pain.

EDRIC. (*to GODIVA*) Tell me at once
 Where he bestowed the gold, whither he went...
 Leofric; you understand; Leofric. Speak.

GODIVA. Betray a noble man for lure or bribe...
 Or life? No. Feeble as I am, kind heav'n
 Will give me strength to baffle *all* the fiends.

EDRIC. (*fiercely*) The fiends! Ragnal, come hither;
 come aside. (*takes RAGNAL aside—business*)

WYNFREDA. (*tauntingly to GODIVA*) The almost novice
 ...will remember that
 The love which shifted to her from another,
 May shift back again.

(RAGNAL *exits at back*. EDRIC *goes to chair L.*)

GODIVA. The faithless woman sees
In all the world only betrayèrs and betrayed.
That is her curse, as it is yours. Dear love
And trust you cannot understand at all.
You cannot add one pang, one grief to what
I suffer.

(WYNFREDA *turns aside with a baffled, vengeful gesture, and goes up to L. 3*)

EDRIC. (*going forward to her*) Well, I can... You're
not alone
In this. Think well.

(GODIVA *looks about in terror*)

Some one you do not see.

(GODIVA *gives a little shriek*)

GODIVA. You would not; could not; he is safe. I heard
You say, he was not worth your troubling with.

EDRIC. (*to his guards*) Take her back; nor let her stir
without my word.

(*The guards take GODIVA R. in front*)

GODIVA. God's mercy! no, not that. I dread to name it.

EDRIC. Ah, now we're touching to the quick.

(*Enter the ABBESS and two nuns at back, the latter carrying tapers*)

ABBESS. (*going E. to chair*. You sent
For me, Duke Edric.

EDRIC. Stay you there, good mother.
Wait and see.

EDRIC. (*going up and calling*) Now, Ragnal, come.

(*Enter at back Danish guards, they part R. and L., and show a tall masked man in soldier dress, bearing a great axe. He goes to R. C., and stands with his axe-point on the ground*)

EADBURGA. (*in a horrified whisper*) Ingulf, the dumb
headsman.

JILLEN—GURTH. The headsman!

(Then enter BERTULF chained. He is much feebler. Two guards behind him. He halts and looks about. A general murmur of compassion. The guards, at a gesture from EDRIC, push him to c., abreast of the headsman. GODIVA, who has steeled herself on seeing the headsman—gives a low, smothered sob when she sees BERTULF. She acts as if about to spring forward, the guards hold her back. She falls on her knees and bows down, her shoulders heaving. The stage is dressed so that there is a line of characters R. and L., and guards at the back.)

EDRIC. Bertulf, Thegn of Leicester, you stand condemned
To die for treason to our king, Canute.

BERTULF. Is the king here?

EDRIC. The king is not here, but one
Who, with a word can save you, Thegn. Look 'round!

BERTULF. I see the Holy Abbess, Edelgitha.

EDRIC. Look again.

BERTULF. I see Thegn Alstane's daughter,
The Lady Wynfreda.

(WYNFREDA turns her back)

EDRIC. Again! Again!
Look well.

BERTULF. I see my swineherd and two women thralls.
Who is it that can save me? What girl is
Crying?

GODIVA. (rising) I...father...I...(breaking from
the guards) Your child...Godiva. (clinging to
him)

BERTULF. My old head swims. I cannot well see for tears.
How you came here, I do not know. Tell me,
Who can save me.

EDRIC. Tell him...tell him.

GODIVA. (separating from BERTULF) I...cannot...

EDRIC. Well, then, I shall.

GODIVA. (to EDRIC) No, no; you shall not; you
Shall not; you shall not put this devil's choice
On me...on a child...a daughter...on the old
Man's child...it's infamy.

(to the ABBESS) Mother, mother, he
Must not. If there's a curse in Heaven, call
It down on him. He'd have me betray England,
Saxon England...the hope, the agony
Of our suffering England...that to a child
To save her father's life.

EDRIC. Not England, but
The Lord Leofric.

- GODIVA. I tell you it is
England against the Dane, against the traitor
Saxon...who is worse than Dane...who is devil
And brute, not man. Oh God! Oh God!
- EDRIC. It is
The Lord Leofric, your lover against
Your father.
- BERTULF. (*weakly*) The Lord Leofric, I do
Not understand.
- EDRIC. Why, she was with him
Upon Bardon Hill last night; warned him; lit
The signal fire for him when he had fled.
She knows his plans, his hiding place. If she
Refuse to tell it, you shall die.
- BERTULF. (*confused and weakly*) Is this
True, Godiva?
- GODIVA. They took me prisoner, there.
I lit the flame; yes, I lit the flame; yes,
I warned him...But...What more...I will not
say.
Father, it is for them, not me to do...
For this base coward...torturing a woman
And an old, old man...when if he were true...
If this vile, wriggling traitor were but true
To anything, he should be facing Lord
Leofric for the mastery of England.
- BERTULF. (*pleading childishly*) But you will save me,
Godiva, you will
Save me?
- GODIVA. Father, dearest father, as you...
Love me; as I...love you; so...we love England...
Do we not? You would not have me sell my faith?...
Not for my life, would you?
- BERTULF. (*tapping her hand childishly*) I know you love
me.
I am very faint; they made me march all night
Afoot, but you will save me.
- GODIVA. I can die
With you, father. (*bending her head over his hands*)
- BERTULF. No, not you, Godiva!
Better me than you. Surely Lord Edric
Would not do that?
- EDRIC. (L.) You hear the old man's prayer.
Answer! Your lover or your father? Answer!
- GODIVA. (*wavering*) Or my.....father? (*turns and
looks at BERTULF, clings to him*)
Ah! (*smoothing BERTULF'S hair*) I cannot see you
die.

It is too much; it is too much. (*disengaging herself gently from BERTULF and taking a feeble step toward EDRIC, in an utterly weak and broken manner, passing her fingers through each other*)
Well, then....

If I must tell....if it is forced from me....

EDRIC. (*bending toward her coaxingly*) Ay, lady? ay, lady?

GODIVA. The lord....

WYNFREDA. (*in a ringing, bitter laugh*) Ha! Ha! Ha!
She cannot piece his name together.

GODIVA. (*suddenly straightening and with all her force*)
No! (*in lower intense tone after a pause*)

I cannot: God help me; no; I cannot. (*drops on her knee and bows her head*)

EDRIC. (*who has turned angrily at WYNFREDA'S laugh and speech and then at GODIVA'S "No" turns sharply and ferociously to GODIVA, listens in rage to the succeeding line and reaching forward grasps her arm and pulls her to her feet*) You shall not slip away from it. Go on!

GODIVA. (*waving him away with a gesture—and then as if grasping after her thoughts*) What was I about to say? What infamy? (*speaking in cold, hollow tone, as if to herself at first*)

There's something cold as ice within my breast:

Hot iron's burning in my brain; my blood

Is hammering in my temples: My voice

Chokes in my throat....(*as if struggling to speak*)

I want to say....I want

To say that the call of the Saxon race;

That England's call is louder than the call

Of blood....the heavens are calling it above

The cry of mother, brother, father.

BERTULF. (*despairing*) Ah!

EDRIC. (*savagely*) It's the voice of Leofric that you hear.

GODIVA. (*with awful intensity*) If Leofric's voice is the voice of England,

I must answer to it.

EDRIC. She has spoken.

Take him away; he dies: set the headsman's block

By the eastern gate, and wait her coming.

She has condemned him.

GODIVA. But he has done naught.

EDRIC. Yes, treason, like yours, to the King Canute!

GODIVA. The King! I would ask the King for his life:

I'd beg it on my knees; but not of you,

Monster!

EDRIC. (*pointing to BERTULF*) Away!

BERTULF. I know she loves me...I

Know she loves me.

(*Exit with guards*)

(*The headsman lifts his ax, points after BERTULF. EDRIC nods. The headsman turns grimly and follows off R.*)

(*GODIVA shudders through her whole frame, steals a swift horrified glance after her father, staggers and stands speechless, swaying with emotion*)

EDRIC. (*having watched BERTULF off, goes up L. by table, and striking his palm on the coffer, while scowling at GODIVA*) Now, by St. Edmund, for you.

ABBESS. Touch that not,
My lord, for in that coffer there is something
Fatal to pride and pow'r...a winding sheet,
A shroud.

EDRIC. (*taking his hand away fearfully*) Fables for children! (*with renewed swagger*) She is
Her father's murrress; hale her forth, pinion her
Upon a horse and...(*looking about*) with this
blinded thrall,
To lead her...take her to die with Bertulf.

(*All the women cry out*)

ABBESS. Not, lord, to die unshriven? Nay, as she
Is noble, let a mantle hide these rags.
It may clothe you, some little, lord, when you
Are called to die.

EDRIC. (*going forward L.*) No! (*then smiling cunningly*) Well, a scant half-hour,
For her confessing; send her a priest, mother.

(*The ABBESS whispers to the nuns, who take the tapers and exeunt at back, preceding her. GODIVA sobs. EDRIC goes up stage and signals to guards who exeunt. JILLEN and EADBURGA weeping go forward each side of GODIVA and kneel at her feet, facing up stage.*)

EADBURGA. Take courage, lady...we pray...we pray
for you.

(*CUTHWOLF, led by little ALFRED, gropes his way forward to her*)

CUTHWOLF. Lady, lady, would I could die to save you.

(*GODIVA, who has been looking at the two women, turns at his voice*)

GODIVA. Cuthwolf. (*gives him her hand, which he grasps and kisses*)

EDRIC. (*coming down impatient and standing by table L.*)
Now, varlets, leave her with your whines
And groans....

(*The two women rise and go up, their heads bowed, weeping. CUTHWOLF, led by ALFRED, follows. They exeunt R.*)

EDRIC. (*going close to GODIVA*) You still have time: you still can save your father....

And yourself. I swear your stubborn soul has won
Me more than pray'rs or pleading would. Why lose
Yourself for this lost cause, for this Leofric,
This vain boy, while I, a man who conquers, and
Who rules, would put you next the throne?

GODIVA. (*dazed, as not understanding*) I...can
Say...nothing. (*shudders*)

(*Enter the two nuns at back bearing a mantle, DUNSTAN enters with them*)

EDRIC. (*sees DUNSTAN*) Think of it: you yet have time.

(*The nuns go forward, place the mantle on table L. in front and return to go off. EDRIC goes up, points to GODIVA*)

DUNSTAN. (*going forward—touches GODIVA gently on the shoulder*) Kneel, daughter.

(*GODIVA kneels mechanically*)

Pray to Him whose heart is love.

(*GODIVA turns her head and recognizes him in a dazed, wondering way. DUNSTAN bends over her*)

DUNSTAN. (*in low tone to her*) Gain time; trust in St. Michael the Archangel.

Help is at hand...through Michael the Archangel.
(*aloud to EDRIC*) Lord Duke; the lady begs a moment's grace

For silent pray'r. She should be left alone....

A little time to bring her mind to calm....

I'll wait nearby. (*goes slowly up to door at back opens it, looks swiftly back at EDRIC, and exits quickly going L.*)

EDRIC. (*L. 2.*) Then, lady, let reflection
Come with pray'r.

(*Is about to go out at back. Enter RAGNAL R., hurriedly*)

RAGNAL. My lord, there's evil news...the gold.

EDRIC. What news?

RAGNAL. They call for orders, lord.

EDRIC. Evil?

(Casting a look at GODIVA, turns impatiently and exits at back with RAGNAL. GODIVA, who has started at RAGNAL'S abrupt call, turns slowly around and sees that all are gone. She passes her hand across her face)

GODIVA. Ah, it's unreal. . . . He stood there, so old,
And gray, and said "You'll save me?" Pray! Oh
pray!

Can the murtheress of her father pray? They're right.
The Murtheress! Thro' the whole convent "murtheress"
rings

In my ears. (pausing) "Gain time." Where did
those words come from?

Dunstan, Dunstan said that "Trust in St. Michael"—
(looking at the window L.)

The angel with the sword. No, let me turn
To the Mother of Sorrows here. (going R. before the
Virgin's statue and dropping to her knees) O
Mother

Of breaking hearts, pity me, pity me.

(A sound of broken glass—the window L. opens and
LEOFRIC appears, sword in hand. GODIVA starts to her
feet. LEOFRIC steps down on the table and by the stool
to the stage)

GODIVA. Leofric! (springs to his arms) Leofric! (they
embrace) How

Came you here? Have you scattered Edric's Danes?

LEOFRIC. We pounced on the treasure-escort; routed them.

GODIVA. Yes, yes? Then?

LEOFRIC. Then the gold did its fatal work.

Some slew each other for a share, and some
Marched off their men in anger. With what few
I could recall I rode this way.

GODIVA. (anxiously) Well? Well?

LEOFRIC. Word came that they had taken you, and so
With six brave Saxon thegns, all sworn to me,
I've come to save you.

(GODIVA recoils from him.)

GODIVA. Me? Me?

LEOFRIC. It's perilous. . . .

By the cornice to the belfry tow'r, but
You can brave it. . . . good Dunstan showed the way
To save you.

GODIVA. Me? Me? No! My father! He
Is taken out to die. You must save him....

Not me. Saving me, would make death sure for him.

LEOFRIC. Your father?

GODIVA. (*in pitcous tones*) I let them take him out to die,
When one small word of treachery to you
Had saved him. Now, his life is mine, is yours.
Go! save him!

LEOFRIC. Canute, the King, is marching hither
With an army. We are not strong enough
To make attack, but, I can save you.

GODIVA. (*strongly*) Save
My father. Edric is the tyrant. At the worst,
Leofric, fight your way to the king, and cry
For justice. Go! Go to the eastern gate,
Where they have set the headsman's block. Delay
Not: go!

LEOFRIC. But you, Godiva, you, love?
Not without you.... 'twere base: 'twere shameful.

GODIVA. (*snatching his dagger from his belt*) Go!

LEOFRIC. What would you do?

GODIVA. (*recoiling*) Die, unless you go: so go.

The hero-mark is his who hurries to
His task across his breaking heart. Your task
Is sword in hand beside my father, there
Amid his enemies. (*he stands irresolute*) Must I
pray you

On my knees, Leofric? Or must I die
To stir you to your task?

LEOFRIC. (*with sudden resolve*) I'll go; he shall
Not die!

GODIVA. (*springing to him and kissing him quickly*) O
brave Leofric! I shall be safe.

Fear not for me! (*putting dagger in her girdle*)

LEOFRIC. (*springing from stool to table*) Farewell! fare-
well! (*springing from table to window, GODIVA
steps to table*) He shall
Not die! (*disappears*)

(*Enter EDRIC R.*)

GODIVA. (*closing the window*) O brave Leofric!

EDRIC. (*going quickly forward*) The rebel?

(*GODIVA takes up the mantle.*)

GODIVA. The archangel!

EDRIC. (*R. in front*) Was it Leofric? By
That window? By all the devils.... (*rushing across*)

GODIVA. Beware!

(EDRIC puts one foot on stool—GODIVA flings the mantle over him—pushes him back: he staggers and falls backward. GODIVA steps to the floor, and as he struggles to free himself, she stands above him, dagger in hand.)

EDRIC. Huscarles! Ragnal!

(Enter quickly OMNES, RAGNAL from back. Guards from r. Guards from back. The ABBESS and the Nuns from back. JILLEN, EADBURGA, GURTH, CUTHWOLF, and little ALFRED leading him.)

EDRIC. (rising) Seize her!

(RAGNAL and a soldier grasp GODIVA and drag her r. in front.)

Did you not see a Saxon knave escaping
From that window?

RAGNAL. No, lord; we heard your cry
For help, and she...

EDRIC. (mad with rage) Away with her, pinioned
Upon a horse.

(The ABBESS has gone by table r. The nuns take up the mantle and X with it to GODIVA.)

EDRIC. (snatching the mantle) No, not a rag. (with a sudden diabolical laugh) Not death (flinging down the mantle)

Alone but shame. Bare as her soul will go
Before its Maker... shall she ride to death.
Refuse, and the convent burns to ashes.

(GODIVA shudders, totters and almost falls.)

ALL THE WOMEN. Mercy, lord! Mercy.

ABBESS. Mercy, mercy, lord!

EDRIC. The mercy that she showed her aged father!

ABBESS. Such shame upon a woman, lord, is shame
Upon yourself.

EDRIC. I swear it by the Cross!

That he or she who puts on her a garment
Made for living man or woman, dies!

ABBESS. (rising—with weird meaning) For

Living man or woman? Is that the fixed
Unalterable term of your oath, my lord?

EDRIC. It is my oath.

(The ABBESS Xs. to the coffer l. GODIVA shrieks and falls. Cries of compassion, grief and horror. Sudden and entire darkness on the stage.)

THE ABBESS. (*heard calling in the darkness*) Not for the living. Not for the living.
Woven for the dead; a winding sheet!
A winding sheet!

(*The groans and murmurs die out. During the making of the dark change, music symbolical of the preceding scene gradually dying out. Then, suddenly, a peal of bells, and following it lively music played, piano at first, then louder, as the voice of the gleeman is heard singing to the harp accompaniment.*)

Merry and light in Coventry town,
We dance at the Michelmas fair:
We'll drink brown ale till the sun goes down,
And we'll sing to the devil with care.

(*Before this quatrain is finished, lights up showing*)

SCENE 2.—*The Market Square in Coventry. It must be set wide so as to stand outside the sides and backing of the previous scene. On the R. a large stone house pierced by an arch at 1 extends up stage. A row of houses and shops at back. A church on the L. The setting is for three sides of a square, with a street entering through a lofty arch at R. 4, another street at L. 2. . . . and an entrance through the arch R. 1. At R. 2 just above the arch, a stone horse-block with two steps. It is noon.*

DISCOVERED.—*A crowd of citizens reproducing a mediæval fair—peddlers, vendors of odds and ends, etc., etc., noise and merriment. RUSTY RUNNION standing on the stone horse block is singing and capering. Seated on the lower step is the harper playing. A number of young men and women are dancing and singing the repetition of the gleeman's verse. This kept up for a half a minute.*

(*Enter by arch R. 1, EADBURGA, JILLEN and GURTH, dejected. They look behind them and X L.*)

RUNNION. (*recognizing JILLEN, jumps from his block and Xs. to her*) Well, goose-girl, are you Mistress Swineherd, or are you still kissable?

(*The dancing ceases. The group of three turn toward him reproachfully*)

What, married, and in trouble already; take a leaf from my book. To the devil with care; come, dance as you did yesterday for your Lady Godiva.

GURTH. Don't you know, fool, that they are taking the Lady Godiva out to die.

(The slow tolling of a large bell begins)

RUNNION. The passing bell!

THE PEOPLE. The passing bell! the passing bell!

(Enter RAGNAL R. at back with two guards. Enter DUNSTAN R. I by arch.)

RAGNAL. *(C. at back)* By Edric, Duke of Mercia, sentence of death

Has been decreed on Bertulf, Thegn of Leicester,
And on his daughter, Godiva, for treason

To the king. *(murmurs and cries)* And further, that
all may learn

To loathe her crime, and look in scorn upon *(the bell tolls)*

The criminal, the Lady Godiva, will be taken through
The Market place: Long live the

King! *(turns and exits with guards.)*

(Commotion and questioning—JILLEN and EADBURGA and GURTH are seen L., explaining pityingly to the people. The bell tolls.)

DUNSTAN. *(pushing thro' the crowd)* He has not told
you all. The lady is

Condemned to pass this way to death unclad....

Worse to the trembling maid than death itself.

(The bell tolls—murmurs from the people.)

In the name of the angels of purity,

Kneel, then, and pray Heaven's pity to enfold her,
(strongly) And let none, as you hope for mercy,

look

Upon her.

(Murmurs of compassion.)

GURTH. Kneel! Kneel!

(The bell tolls. All kneel with bowed heads along line, from R. 4 to L. 2. Enter EDRIC R. I, he Xs. L. and turns.)

EDRIC. No pray'rs; no kneeling pray'rs for such as she.
Stand up and gaze.

(The people rise and turn angry faces on EDRIC.)

DUNSTAN. (*holding up crucifix*) On all who heap dark shame

Upon this martyr'd maid, the Lord will lay
A heavy hand. For sin like that, saith the Lord, (*the bell tolls*)

Thou shalt be cursed; yea, He shall smite thee blind.
(*advancing to EDRIC and holding up crucifix*)

And thou shalt perish, and no man can save thee.
(*turning to crowd*) Kneel. (*the bell tolls. The people kneel with pitying cries.*)

(*to EDRIC*) Kneel. (*EDRIC turns away in anger*)

(*DUNSTAN advances closer to EDRIC*) Kneel, and if thou hast no mercy, pray!

(*EDRIC looks at the cross, cowers and crouches facing front, but does not kneel. The bell tolls.*)

(*A prolonged lamenting cry of women and men, off stage R. at back. It is taken up by those kneeling on the stage in moans and pitying cries, as enter slowly R. 4 Danish guards, two and two with reversed spears, at wide intervals. Then two nuns with lighted tapers. Then the ABBESS walking alone. Then GODIVA on a horse, which is led by CUTHWOLF at the bridle, little ALFRED leading CUTHWOLF. GODIVA'S shoulders and arms are bare; around her body, from under the armpits, she is swathed with the web, which also encraps her limbs, as far as the knees, as she sits side-saddle on the horse, her right foot in the stirrup or drawn backward from it. Her arms are pinioned behind her. Her hair streams down her back. She gazes upward in pain and pleading. The bell tolls. Two nuns follow her. The little procession passes slowly off L. 2. DUNSTAN, who has held his posture by EDRIC, turns away from him as GODIVA disappears. EDRIC seeing DUNSTAN turn away, stands erect. A trumpet sounds off R. The people rise slowly and turn to each other. DUNSTAN turns again to EDRIC, who smarting and angry Xs to C as enter RAGNAL R. 1.*)

RAGNAL. King Canute's army is without the town
The King himself is coming hither.

EDRIC. See him
Attended. (*going with RAGNAL R.*) This is great news: he'll see how I
Can deal with traitors. (*the bell tolls*) Soft! Silence that bell!

(*Exit RAGNAL R. 1*)

(going L. c. to the people) Make merry: the king is here!

DUNSTAN. The King! The King!

(The people follow DUNSTAN off L.)

(EDRIC goes forward angrily looking off R. I as enter CANUTE, with THOROLD and RAGNAL R. I.)

EDRIC. (kneeling) Most mighty king and overlord, your servant!

CANUTE. Rise! What mean these funeral bells?

EDRIC. They ring the death
Of traitors, liege.

CANUTE. They say a woman's taken
Out to die. Do we war on women, lord?

EDRIC. She—the Lady Godiva—took large share
In this revolt that's led by Lord Leofric.

CANUTE. The Lady Godiva. And he, Leofric?

EDRIC. Still to be taken.

CANUTE. (angrily.) Ha!

(Cries of the crowd heard off L. as in a distant cheer.)

RAGNAL. (going up and looking off L.) Some tumult, lord.

(Cries and shouts coming nearer.)

EDRIC. Call out your carles, and put the tumult down.

RAGNAL. A rescue!

(Cries of "To the king! To the king!" heard off. Danish soldiers enter B. I.)

EDRIC. Guard the king! (The soldiers form in front of Canute. Enter DUNSTAN L.)

DUNSTAN. (as addressing those off.) To the king! The King is here!

(The people rush on from L. and X to R. and turn, looking back. JILLEN delighted, clapping her hands. Enter LEOFRIC and six Saxon nobles, fighting with the Danish guards and driving them before them. They are ranged in a semi-circle enclosing the horse, which is now led by GURTH. GODIVA is now completely covered by a scarlet mantle, her hands unpinioned. BERTULF is by the side of the horse. CUTHWOLF with little ALFRED on his shoulder follows. As they reach the c. of stage)

LEOFRIC. The King! The King!

CANUTE. (mounting the stone block.) I am the King,
Canute.

EDRIC. (with savage joy—recognizing him) Leofric!

LEOFRIC. Justice! Justice! lord king!

(Throwing down his sword. All the Saxons throw down their swords.)

CANUTE. *(recognizing GODIVA)* Is that The Lady GODIVA.

EDRIC. Yes!

CANUTE. Your pray'r, lady?

GODIVA. Mercy for my father. *(pointing to EDRIC)* justice upon him!

TABLEAU AND CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*The Hall of EDRIC'S Castle. The set is to give the idea of a noble hall of the period—wainscoted in dark oak, which is ornamented with heraldic shields. Hung around the walls are shields, spears, armor, swords and trophies of war and chase: heavy, oak-beamed ceiling. Across the entire width of the scene at back a tapestry curtain ornamented with crude tapestry figures in dull colors; it is to be practical so as to admit of being drawn back for three feet on each side of the center. It is hung about three feet below line of ceiling, giving the idea of dividing the hall into two parts. The heavy oak ceiling beams seem to continue beyond it. Back of the curtain a backing representing the continuation of the Hall. A low, single step dais R. in front against wall. On it a chair or throne. Beside the dais a small table covered by a red cloth trimmed with gold lace. On the table a gong and mallet. Entrance is given at L. 2 by curtained door at top of a stair of five steps with small lobby at the top and balustraded in keeping with the rest of the room—also by curtained door R. 2 and by curtain at back. It is lighted by deep-embursed windows. Time, afternoon.*

DISCOVERED.—EDRIC *before the throne. He wears robes of state. His brows are knitted. The curtains at back are drawn apart. He turns sharply at the sound.*

(Enter RAGNAL at back.)

RAGNAL.—It is as you have ordered, lord. The Danes of your guard await without. (*indicating back and L*)

EDRIC. Then, it is as
Canute has ordered. Leofric, that rash fool, will feel
My vengeance through their biting swords.

RAGNAL. I feared
When the king withdrew upon their plea for justice,
That he leaned to mercy.

EDRIC. I did not. Kings
Must be humored. He would have't appear that he
Held council ere he struck.

RAGNAL. Ay, lord, but when
The Abbess told him how you shamed the lady. . . .
He was hot in anger.

- EDRIC. Bah! Kings are short
Of memory for others' troubles. Justice,
That word for jugglers, stands with them as't does
With us, for what adds most to their account.
- RAGNAL. The king cried "She'll have justice."
- EDRIC. Does this look
As though he meant her mercy? There's a thing
Called justice taught by schoolmen and. . . at times. . .
By priests in which a wise old owl holds up
A scales, to weigh the deed against the motive.
But mostly. . . in this miserable world. . .
Interest with sly finger tips the beam,
And then the owl cries justice. Now, for the king,
I have that coming which will blind his eyes;
To all these small appeals. Send to the tow'r (*point-
ing upward*)
And when our Oswald's horse appears above
The hill, come quickly to me.
- RAGNAL. Ay, my lord.
(*Exits R. Enter THOROLD hastily by stair*)
- THOROLD. Lord Duke, the king is coming.
- EDRIC. And welcome, lord.
- THOROLD. (*looking over his shoulder and then quickly*)
Mark this; You sent a letter hinting some
Dark way to kill King Edmund Ironsides.
- EDRIC. (*with elation.*) He read my letter?
- THOROLD. He wished to stop your plot
And gave such orders for your messenger.
If he would kill that king, he'd do't in battle.
I have no squeamishness like that, so took
The only way to stop your henchman's mouth.
- EDRIC. Yes, yes. . . a henchman more or less, what mat-
ter?
- THOROLD. Canute is still of qualmish mind, so keep
Him busy with these rebels, and avoid
The subject of your letter. He'd see this young
Godiva first; relent to her if he
Relents.
- EDRIC. Godiva . . . no! nor Lord Leofric.
For them (*enter CANUTE by stair L.*) the justice of
the Dane.
- CANUTE. (*coming forward.*) And what,
Duke Edric, is the justice of the Dane?
- EDRIC. Why, liege, a loyal sword at rebel throats.
- CANUTE. H'm! . . . Thorold, call the guard.
- THOROLD. (*going up*) Ho there, the guard!
(*Enter the Danish guards, they pass down L. in single file*)

CANUTE. Swords! (*the guards draw their swords*)
 All loyal Danes, and quick to strike at my
 Command? (*they make a cutting sweep with their*
swords.) Stand watchful in the guardroom.
 When
 I strike upon this bell, come forth and range
 Behind that curtain, which will be close drawn,
 And at the second stroke come forth and slay,
 Or do my bidding on, the man. . . .

EDRIC. Or woman

CANUTE. Who stands there. (*pointing to a spot on the*
floor about c.) Now go.

(*The guards exeunt at back with THOROLD directing them.*
The curtain is drawn to)

(*to* EDRIC.) Does this give promise of
 The justice of the Dane?

EDRIC. Exact and full,
 My liege.

CANUTE. Thorold, bring Lady Godiva here.

(*Exit THOROLD up stair.*)

EDRIC. She was a very tigress of revolt,
 And turned on me. . . on me, and threw a cloak
 Upon my head, and with a buffet knocked
 Me down. Then. . . .

CANUTE. (*laughing.*) You? knocked you? Upon my
 soul,
 She is a girl of rare activities.
 (*Gravely.*) And so, Duke Edric, this is why you
 shamed her?

EDRIC. And cause enough.

CANUTE. I would see her alone.

(*Enter THOROLD L.*)

THOROLD. She is coming, sire.

EDRIC. I will be gone, liege. (*salutes and exits R.*)

CANUTE. (*to THOROLD, who has x'd to him.*) At the first
 stroke bring the other prisoners in.

(*Low voice.*) You'll find. . . perhaps, someone by the
 curtain there.

Take him away.

(*CANUTE goes forward. THOROLD goes quickly to Cur-*
tain R.)

THOROLD. (*raising curtain.*) Lord Edric!

EDRIC. (*appearing an instant.*) I. . . waited you,
 Jarl Thorold.

(*Exeunt.*)

L. of C.

(*Canute—facing front—smiles. Enter GODIVA by the stair, mournful, dejected, watchful*)

CANUTE. And now. . . perhaps. . . the justice of the Dane.

(*GODIVA descends. CANUTE'S manner through the scene that follows is one of serious banter*)

Well, lady, we meet again.

GODIVA *absorbed in her pleading and in the gravity of her position is always serious*)

GODIVA. (*kneeling to him.*) Sire!

CANUTE. Rise up.

GODIVA. First, let me pray my aged father's life.

CANUTE. True, you look comely, kneeling there,

(*GODIVA with an angry start rises*) but still
I'd have you stand. . . if you'd make pray'r to me. . .

(*In answer to an enquiring look.*) You are more on
level with my eyes.

GODIVA. My father's life, sire!

CANUTE. (*with mock severity.*) Yes: we'll come to that.

Your father's nigh the term of mortal days.

GODIVA. Oh, sire, you wring my very heart to say't.

CANUTE. Well, he is past three-score: we cannot live

Forever.

GODIVA. Indeed, I've heard my father say

His father lived to eighty years. 'Tis hard

And cruel that the fewness of the years

Still left to him should anyway be held

To ease my grief at seeing him die now. . . .

CANUTE. No king can lengthen any man's last day.

GODIVA. I've made you angry, sire, when I had hoped

To touch your heart.

CANUTE. Lady, it is because

You cross me.

GODIVA. How, sire?

CANUTE. How, sire? There

is first

A count to settle between you and me.

But yesterday I met a girl. . . . the sister

Of a "thrall," who, glib enough, told me a tale,

Of running fast from some unfavored lover,

To wed (upon a hilltop) some one. . . . more. . . .

To her mind.

GODIVA. 'Twas Cuthwolf, sire, said that. I

said:

"Do not believe him."

CANUTE. Yet said it so that
 I believed, and then by pretty simpers gave
 It confirmation. And yet what do I find?
 You are a noble lady, convent-bred.
 You face a storm that drove myself to shelter.
 You dare the forest path, and on the way
 Deceive your king. For what? To warn your rebel
 Lover not to light a signal-fire, and then
 Direct this rebel how to seize the gold—
 Meant for my treasury, no doubt. These are not
 The doings of a convent-scholar, but
 Of a captain at the head of armies.

GODIVA. Sire,
 It is not quite that way. You take the tale
 A woman told.

CANUTE. Another woman, eh?
 Beware the sins that spring from jealousy!
 Well, that's not all; once having ordered Lord
 Leofric off to rob the escort,

GODIVA. 'Twas
 My father's gold, stolen. . .

CANUTE. Lady, let me
 Go on. Having thus captained it, you lit
 The blaze of treason, so the hills around
 Took flame. And now you come with fluted voice
 To cry me mercy for Leofric and. . .

GODIVA. I have not breathed the Lord Leofric's name.

CANUTE. Ah, you would let him die?

GODIVA. No, no, sire, no!

CANUTE. He was to have his turn, I see.

GODIVA. Yes, sire.

CANUTE. Now to your most unforgivable misdeeds.
 For when, it seems, you were condemned to die,
 Your lover, your Leofric, came to you,
 Disguised as an archangel—I'm not quite sure
 On that. . . . but when you'd given him fresh orders,
 You. . . the meek, convent maid! . . . turned swift
 about
 And, clapping a woman's cloak upon a stalwart
 Interruptor's head, fair knocked him down,
 And thumped and beat him.

(GODIVA *excited, angered, gives speechless denial*)

Oh, 'tis true, the marks
 And bruises were loud wailed of by lord. . . .

GODIVA. (*fiercely.*) Sire,
 Do not name him. . . do not profane my ears
 By naming him who put such world of shame
 Upon a woman.

- CANUTE. Well, I will not name him.
- GODIVA. You jest, lord king, you mock my misery.
- CANUTE. I'd see you smile.
- GODIVA. You've seen the mercy that
A woman meets in Mercia—and you can smile!
Lord, there's no laughter this side madness in
My heart while you withhold the hand of grace.
- CANUTE. Why should I spare these rebels? Why spare
you?
- GODIVA. For me, I ask you nothing. I have been snatched
From death that had no terrors left for me.
But for my father—old and gray—who gave
Me life, and for the Lord Leofric, who. . . .
So young and fair and brave and true, lord king;
And for the young lords with him—brave, clear souls,
Mercy. Mercy!
- CANUTE. I have not been merciful.
- GODIVA. Mercy is twin with love.
- CANUTE. I am not loved.
- GODIVA. There is a love, lord king, a love that you
Must share, before you bind our Saxon hearts
To yours—the love of England.
- CANUTE. You make it seem
Most fair and welcome. (*suddenly.*) But you give me
hate.
Why this revolt, rebellion? Tell me that.
- GODIVA. We only know you through the grasping,
strangling
Hand your henchman laid on us. The more he
clutched
Our throats, the more he. . . . shamed us, all the more
That love of Saxon race, of Saxon England
Became the very lifeblood of our hearts,
The anointing oil that sanctified our deeds,
That magic that made heroes out of clods,
That turned our pains and grief to ecstasy,
Till Edmund Ironsides, our Saxon king,
Stripped of the half of his dominion, stood
Through all our dreary night, the one great star.
- CANUTE. (*aside.*) Edmund! I had forgotten.

(*Goes forward and takes up hammer*)

Edric must

Be summoned. (*about to strike*)

GODIVA. (*tremulously.*) Let me not plead in vain,
Lord king!

CANUTE. (*aside.*) I must not strike; 'twould bring all in.
 (*lays down hammer*)
 (*aloud.*) Lady, rest here awhile; you've pleaded well!
 And wrought more for your cause than you can dream.

(*Exit R.*)

GODIVA. He smiled in going. Is it the smile of him
 Who presently will kill. . . . the butcher's smile?
 (*shudders.*) Horrible! (*breaking down.*) In vain!
 In vain! My heart must break.
 I see again my father's pleading eyes.
 I hear once more that awful, clanging bell.
 I see them one by one led forth to die. . . .
 The first of them, Leofric! No; not *him*.
 Lord-king, not *him!* . . . nor him, my father. . . . sire!
 (*looking about in terror*)
 This is the demon's house. But in his face . . .
 The face of the king—there was light and promise.
 Ah, he will be merciful; he bade me smile.
 I have pleaded well. The light is breaking.
 Laughter is bubbling to my lips. . . they're saved!
 I see them safe and free. My father, and
 Leofric! I'll see him on his prancing steed
 Again. . . . my lord. Come, I have saved you, dears.
 And my heart is light with a great wild hope. (*breaks
 into a ringing laugh*)
 To live. . . forever happy. . . . face to face. (*press-
 ing her hands to her bosom*)
 But here, in my heart, my joy will burn and sting
 Till love has drowned it with its happy tears. (*contin-
 ues in inarticulate sobs L. in front*)

(*Enter CANUTE R. followed by THOROLD*)

THOROLD. He is not far off: the bell will bring him.

CANUTE. I must know.

THOROLD. Nay, end this business first, liege.

(*Goes to the throne and strikes the gong. GODIVA L. C.
 startles—the tramp of feet is heard behind the curtain.
 GODIVA turns and looks. The curtain swings a little
 and she shows still greater anxiety. Enter EDRIC R.
 He looks questioningly at GODIVA and as if reassured,
 is about to go forward. He carries a large battle axe.
 Enter RAGNAL R. He Xs quickly to EDRIC*)

RAGNAL. (*pointing upward.*) They see a horseman coming.
 EDRIC. Oswald! Quick!

(Goes forward to CANUTE'S L.—Exit RAGNAL by stair L. Thorold holds back the curtain, as enter BERTULF, LEOFRIC, HUNDIBERT and the five other Saxon nobles. They X to L. and stand there in a group. CANUTE seats himself and takes the hammer in hand. GODIVA has watched the entrance of the Saxons with devoted love. She turns, fascinated, to watch the gestures of CANUTE)

EDRIC. These are the traitors, liege. This gray beard knave
Is Bertulf, thegn of Leicester, who poured out
His gold to feed rebellion.

CANUTE. Why did you take
The rebel side?

BERTULF. (*feebly at first.*) I cannot tell. I was
Brought into it against my better judgment.
But since this Edric put such shame upon
My child, my daughter there, I am a rebel,
In my heart and soul, and cry a curse on him
And all who've given him pow'r to do such wrong.

EDRIC. My liege, he'd veil his treason with his daughter.
He is guilty, but the head of this revolt,
Stands there, Leofric, eorl of Chester, liege.

CANUTE. Stand forth, Leofric, eorl of Chester. Why
Are you found in arms against the king?

(LEOFRIC advances to c.)

LEOFRIC. I stand here in your pow'r, lord-king, because
A miscreant had placed the foulest shame
Upon a lady of the land. I laid
My sword down at your feet that I once more
Might take it up, with your consent to face
Him in a fight to death.

EDRIC. Ha! he, too, takes
The woman for his shield. He came here as
A rebel and he shall not shift his ground.

LEOFRIC. I ask ordeal by combat. . . the ancient law
Of Dane as well as Saxon. (EDRIC sneers)

CANUTE. If it is
Refused?

LEOFRIC. I'd call on every Saxon man
For vengeance. (CANUTE rises. . . the hammer in
hand)

CANUTE. Who will answer to your call?

LEOFRIC. All Saxon England: some are in arms to-day.
This crime unpunished will make England whole.

CANUTE. But, back of what you so cry out upon,
Why this revolt against the peace we made?

LEOFRIC. This greedy craven, 'twas, lord king, who broke
The pact, and, under cover of your name,
Oppressed and plundered, burned and slew, till war,
Though we are weary of it, seemed to be
Better than a peace with demons such as he.

EDRIC. You call me demon, but you rose against
The king.

LEOFRIC. We could not see him through the smoke
Of burning homes you made, but we remembered
Edmund Ironsides, the Saxon king, and swore
To struggle while King Edmund lives.

HUNDIBERT AND THE OTHER SAXONS. Ay, ay,
While Edmund lives.

(CANUTE, *who has been rising in anger, during the last speech, raises his arm*)

EDRIC. They've spoken! Strike, liege.

GODIVA. (*rushing across to CANUTE.*) No; no; do not
strike. I know. . . I know that at
The stroke a greater crime will follow. Do
You not see, his greed of blood has lashed
This fury up. . . . I know your better soul.
Let that proclaim his downfall, not their death,
And give our bleeding England, peace.

(CANUTE gazes long at her.)

EDRIC. How, woman,
Dare you. . .

LEOFRIC. Stop! One base word, and in the face
Of death, I'll strangle you.

EDRIC. (*to CANUTE.*) Now, now!

(*Enter the ABBESS at head of stair. GODIVA still hovers near CANUTE with upraised hand, that he may not strike the bell. CANUTE sees the ABBESS; his hand falls by his side. EDRIC follows the glance and starts. The ABBESS comes down the stair*)

ABBESS. (*to EDRIC.*) Oswald, your henchman, lies dying
in the street.

Riding madly in. . . .

EDRIC. (*cagerly.*) Yes, yes?

ABBESS. His horse was thrown
Before the Convent gate. He gave me this
For you (*holding up a ring*)

EDRIC. (*recognizing it.*) The signet ring! The signet
ring!

ABBESS. And gasped out, "Tell Lord Edric I rode hard
And that King Edmund Ironside is dead."

THE SAXONS. Dead?

(*Breaking into a babel of hoarse cries: "It is not true." "It's false." "It cannot be." "Not dead," and gather in a group L. 2. The hammer drops from CANUTE'S hand, he freezes on EDRIC, turns reproachfully to THOROLD. EDRIC cannot contain his joy. GODIVA stands near throne as if petrified*)

CANUTE. (*distressed.*) What more?

ABBESS. All he could say
was "king found slain."

CANUTE. The Lord have mercy on a brave man's soul!

(*All but CANUTE, EDRIC and THOROLD kneel, those who kneel crying "Amen."*)

EDRIC. (*to the ABBESS.*) The ring!

(*The ABBESS kneeling L. 2 extends her hand*)

THOROLD. King Edmund's sig-
net! That is for
The king.

(*Taking ring and handing it to CANUTE. All kneeling raise their heads without rising*)

EDRIC. (*smothering his wrath.*) The king of all England!
Hail! Hail!

CANUTE. May Edmund's noble spirit enter in
My heart, as here I place his ring upon
My finger. Strong and fearless spirit, touched
With death a moment, he will live again
While brave men breathe. Blotting the past with all
Its tales of blood on either side, he held
The pact of peace. . . . my royal brother. Peace.
To him! (*sits on throne*)

EDRIC. A truce, lord king, to mourning. We
Have still a score to settle here.

(*All rise. GODIVA, trembling with alarm, watches this scene, crouching by the dais*)

CANUTE. (*angry at the interruption.*) What score,
Lord Edric?

EDRIC. Justice due these traitors; death
To this chief of traitors; death to that woman
Traitor, mocking at me there.

CANUTE. Then, it is you
Who sit in judgment here?

EDRIC. My liege, they're judged,
And I demand their death.

- CANUTE. Demand?
- EDRIC. If I
Had not been quick to serve your cause, all Mercia
Would be flaming at his call.
- CANUTE. He leads, then,
Through all Mercia?
- EDRIC. Ay, he had but to lift
His hand and every rebel grasped his sword.
- CANUTE. And you demand?
- EDRIC. A traitor's death for him;
For her.
- CANUTE. No other course?
- EDRIC. (*losing his self-control.*) What other course?
It is deserved; but if 'twere not, I have
Deserved from you this sign of trust in me.
- CANUTE. (*rising.*) I do not grasp you quite.
- EDRIC. Service that was great
At Assandune. . .
- THE SAXONS. (*in rage and threateningly.*) Ah!
- EDRIC. Service in the pact
Of Olney.
- CANUTE. Well?
- EDRIC. And service now that makes
You King of England as you stand to-day.
- (*A cry of smothered horror from all*)
- CANUTE. (*leaving throne, Xing to L. 1.*) If 'tis you take
upon yourself the deed
That makes me king, beware! Is't so?
- EDRIC. (*pointing to THOROLD.*) He knows.
- THOROLD. He lies.
- EDRIC. (*c.*) What, face me down! (*to CANUTE, in white
rage.*) Next you will put
This traitor in my place; in mine who made
You king.
- CANUTE. You've set the term. You are no longer
Duke or lord in Mercia.
- EDRIC. Degraded. Ha!
Then if I made, I can unmake as well.
Death to the Dane!
- (*Swings his axe as if about to crush the king. GODIVA,
who has watched this scene breathlessly, seizes the
fallen hammer at the words "I can unmake as well,"
and strikes the gong as EDRIC raises the axe. The
curtain at back parts suddenly. The soldiers with
lifted swords spring forward in a semi-circle back of
EDRIC*)

CANUTE. (*raising his hand*) Not here! By the city gate;
his body to
The dogs!

(*EDRIC, whose arms have been seized, is about to speak*)

THOROLD. Away with him!

EDRIC. (*the soldiers forcing him off.*) I made you king.

(*Thorold follows them off. CANUTE Xs to throne. The Saxons come forward and kneel to him L. and L. C.*)

LEOFRIC. Lord-king, you have done justice as we prayed.

CANUTE. 'Twas justice twixt the living and the dead.

But there's another justice to be done. (*to GODIVA, raising her*)

Lady, 'tis not an hour since you craved mercy
For these lords. Now I, who am your debtor
For my life, perhaps, here put their lives in your
Fair hands.

GODIVA. Lord! liege lord! their lives!

CANUTE. Saxons,
mark this:

If through this tangle of the fates, it comes
That I'm all England's king, I am resolved
To be the king of English hearts as well.
Back to your homes and sheathe your swords. You
know

I can be Norseman of the Norse in war;
Now learn how I shall vie with Alfred's fame
To lead our England in the path of peace.

BERTULF. My liege, my sovereign liege!

CANUTE. Rise, Saxons!

THE SAXONS. (*rising.*) Canute!

Canute! Hail! Hail!

CANUTE. For you, Leofric, eorl

Of Chester, I shall think on Edric's counsel.

Mercia may need its Saxon leader soon. (*going up*)

LEOFRIC. (*kneeling again.*) Sire! Sire!

(*Enter DUNSTAN, followed by GURTH and JILLEN R.*)

DUNSTAN. Liege and king!

GODIVA. (*turning at his voice and going quickly to him.*)

Oh, Father Dunstan, come

And pray a blessing on the king; he sets

Us free;

(*bringing him forward.*) He knows the Lord Leofric
for

A man to love, a man to lead, he. . .

CANUTE. (*smiling.*) Lady,

The priest, perhaps, has something for himself

To say.

GODIVA. (*abashed.*) Oh, sire! (*she joins BERTULF*)
 DUNSTAN. The people, mad with joy

At Edric's fall, would pray you show yourself.

CANUTE. I go, but stay you here, resourceful priest.

Someone who knows Leofric as a man

To love (*turning to GODIVA*) and lead, I think you
 said, (*to DUNSTAN*) may need

Your ministrations.

GODIVA. My father, sire, grows
 More himself at every breath; he will not need
 The priest.

CANUTE. The Lord Leofric and . . . your father's
 Daughter may?

(*DUNSTAN stands L. 3.*)

GODIVA. Oh, sire!

CANUTE. Come, Saxon lords, with me.

(*Exit R.*)

THE SAXONS. (*following him off.*) Hail! Hail! Hail to
 the king!

GODIVA. Leofric! Father! (*stretching her arms to them*)

BERTULF. (*taking her hands kissing her on forehead*) I
 can but weep for joy. (*turning away*)

LEOFRIC. Godiva, love, forever mine! (*embracing her*)

GURTH. (*who has remained with JILLEN, awe-struck and
 at back.*) Father Dunstan, now's the time. Go on,
 father.

JILLEN. Yes, father; the king said so.

GURTH. And then you'll do the same for us, father.

DUNSTAN. Peace, dolts!

BERTULF. What, two ill-mannered thralls, to dare to speak
 Before their lord!

GODIVA. Father, they are not bond
 Or thrall: the king has set them free. (*turning to
 LEOFRIC.*) And all
 Who serve with faithful hearts, and all who love
 In honor should be one with joy to-day.

CURTAIN.

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